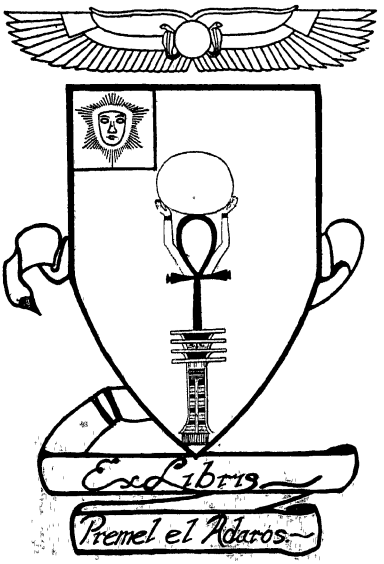
MUSIC
IN
ANCIENT ARABIA
AND
SPAIN

JULIAN RIBERA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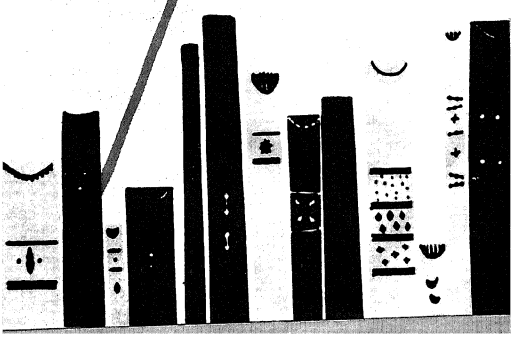

MUSIC IN ANCIENT ARABIA AND SPAIN

PARTIAL LIST OF WORKS

By JULIAN RIBERA Y TARRAGO
Professor of Arabo-Spanish Literature in the University of Madrid

LA MÚSICA DE LAS CANTIGAS

DISCURSO DE ENTRADA EN LA REAL ACADEMIA DE LA HISTORIA

LA ENSEÑANZA ENTRE LOS MUSULMANES DE ESPAÑA

LA MÚSICA ANDALUZA MEDIEVAL EN LAS CANCIONES DE TROVADORES Y MINNESINGERS

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DE MÚSICA Y MÉTRICA GALLEGAS

HISTORIA DE LA MÚSICA ÁRABE MEDIEVAL Y SU INFLUENCIA EN LA ESPAÑOLA

LA MÚSICA DE LA JOTA ARAGONESA

29.

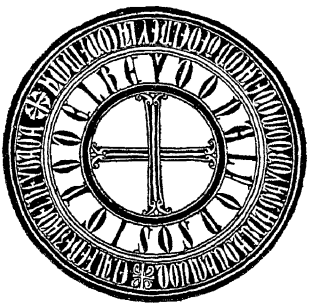
CANTIGA XXVIII, fol. 38 v.° y 39 v.°

30.

CANTIGA XXIX, fol. 39 r.° y v.°

A page from Ribera's photographic reproductions of *Las Cantigas* (from MS 10069, La Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid)

MUSIC IN ANCIENT ARABIA AND SPAIN :: :: :: :: :: BEING LA MÚSICA DE LAS CANTIGAS :: BY JULIAN RIBERA :: :: :: :: :: TRANSLATED AND ABRIDGED BY ELEANOR HAGUE AND MARION LEFFINGWELL :: :: :: :: :: :: ::



1929

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

This book may be divided naturally in the following manner. The first two chapters are introductory in character and review previous publications in the field of Oriental music. Chapters iii, iv, v, and vi begin the historical portion, and cover the territory of western Asia, from the death of Muhammad to the decadence of the art, during the ninth and tenth centuries. Chapters vii and viii deal with the technical side of music during that period. Chapters ix, x, xi, and xii treat the subject of Arabic music in Spain and its evolution there. Chapter xiii describes the earliest known Spanish music that was written in easily understood notation, that of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and shows that this as a rule followed the classic Arabic models.

The remainder of the book outlines Señor Ribera's method of attacking the problem of still more ancient songs, *Las Cantigas*, which because of their notation had always been supposed to be Gregorian music. His knowledge of Arabic models of the best period showed him that these songs fitted the Arabic patterns and in their turn became the models of much later music and verse.

The whole book reveals sources of information hitherto unavailable, and puts many facts of musical history in a new light. Much of the material in the first part of the volume is anecdotal in character, but taken all together it makes a vivid and entertaining picture of a period which, at least in English, has always been a complete blank. The scholarship is of the highest order, for every statement is documented to the very best Arab authorities. This piece of research has waited these many years for a scholar combining, as does Señor Ribera, vast knowledge of Arabic literature and history with an equally wide store of information about classic Spanish music and present-day Spanish folk-music, not to mention patient scholarship that follows up every detail and clue.

With the author's permission, the Spanish text has been condensed at certain points where he has gone into great detail really intended for the Spaniard or the Gregorian specialist. None of the main features of the material have been deleted, nor any data leading to a real understanding on the part of the reader. A literal trans-

lation in the strictest sense has not been attempted, for the genius of the Spanish language is so different from that of English that such an attempt would be unsatisfactory. The lovely flowing curves of the Spanish tongue do not lend themselves to the direct, concise utterance with which we are most at home in our native speech. The aim has been to follow the spirit of the original throughout, although often the structure of sentences has of necessity been altered, which has sometimes meant combining paragraphs originally separate.

The transliteration of Arabic words has been far more of a problem than is at first apparent, for in the original they are given in their Spanish form, familiar to all Spanish-speaking people through many centuries of use. But this is very different from the English equivalents, with the additional complication that there is no single standard for English transliteration. The system used here is chosen in accordance with Señor Ribera's wishes. Consequently, for example, those who wish to refer further to Isfahani's great work, *The Book of Songs*, should search under *Kitab Al-Aghani* if they do not find it under *Kitabo-l-Agani* as here transliterated. Again, the town of "Alhira" is often to be found as "Hira."

It is not the purpose of this book to enter into questions of Arabic scholarship as such, but to aid the reader as far as possible with the unfamiliar Arabic names. The following plan has accordingly been carried out. Names that are perfectly familiar in English, like Harun-al-Rashid, and so on, are given in their most familiar forms. The other words cover such varied subjects as names of people, of places, of musical instruments, and of poetic forms, all of these both in western Asia and in Spain. The effort has been to give each name in such a way that it may be most easily looked up in works of reference; so if the Arabists should find deviations from their favorite forms they are asked to be lenient.

We who live in English-speaking countries are apt to have but slight knowledge of Spanish history, and this makes it hard for us to realize the intense influences exerted on that people by the successive waves from outside which passed over them—Romans, Visigoths, Jews, Syrians, and Arabs. The conflict with the Arabs over

territory and religion was almost continuous during eight hundred years, and the desire for religious conformity which is to be found in the following centuries is a perfectly natural result, showing itself in various ways, as will be seen.

The discoveries of the last few years in connection with the history of the various arts show the same course for all of them, each developing first in Egypt, then in Greece, then in Rome, then in western Asia, and reaching a very high point in Persia. From there the current flowed back into Europe again, partly through the church, partly through commercial developments, and partly through returning crusaders—those eager crusaders who set out to conquer in the name of religion and came back captivated by the non-Christian culture they had found. What has been less well understood is the important part played by Spain in this transmission. This book clearly shows that music followed the same course as the other arts and that Spain was a vital factor in the process. For Spain's contact with Asia during the Middle Ages was far more direct than that of any other country in western Europe, and it was during that period that all the scholars who could possibly do so studied at the great Spanish universities, and thousands of pilgrims journeyed annually from the rest of Europe to the Spanish shrines. These must have helped in the steady spread of these new elements of music.

Thus Spain, instead of living apart from the rest of the world on her own little peninsula, as is so often taken for granted, was really one of the main highways for the diffusion of world culture. Most of us know altogether too little about her, especially about her more profound contributions to all of the arts.

Since the publication in 1922 of *La Música de las Cantigas,* of which this book is the translation, Señor Ribera has extended his research to include French troubadour and German Minnesinger music, working on the manuscripts preserved in the archives in Paris and the volume called *Jenaer Liederhandschrift,* which has been republished in Leipzig (1900).

The method employed in the *Cantigas* was again followed in this later study and proved equally satisfactory. The corresponding results emerge, the same rhythm patterns and harmonic and melodic

patterns, in fact all the elements of the Andalusian tradition. This shows how alive that tradition must have been, and how constant must have been the interchange throughout western Europe. It is an additional proof that European musicians came to Spain not only to sell their wares but also to acquire further material with which to return to their own countries. Señor Ribera has published his findings in three pamphlets under the following title: *La Música andaluza medieval en las canciones de Trobadores y Minnesingers*. In these he explains most graphically the ways in which these manuscripts resemble that of the *Cantigas*, and the work involved in deciphering them.

Profoundest thanks are due to Señor Julian Ribera for his unfailing courtesy and helpfulness; also to Professor Aurelio M. Espinosa, of Stanford University; Professor Antonio G. Solalinde, of the University of Wisconsin; Professor R. J. H. Gottheil, of Columbia University; Professor Abad Baralt, formerly of the University of New Mexico; Professor W. A. Kincaid, of the University of California at Los Angeles; Dr. L. S. Bull, of the Metropolitan Museum of New York; and especially to Miss Calista Rogers; as well as to many others for advice and help.

ELEANOR HAGUE

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CHRONOLOGY

[Supplied by ELEANOR HAGUE]

THE EASTERN ISLAMIC WORLD		MUSICIANS, POETS, AND WRITERS (Some of these traveled in various Islamic countries)	MOORISH SPAIN		CHRISTIAN SPAIN (The country was divided into many small kingdoms and principalities. There was much fighting. Outstanding names are given.)	
		Pre-Muhammadan Poets: Antara, Amiru'l Kais, Zuhair, Tarafa, Al-Aasha, Al-Kamd				
Muhammad born *ca.*	A.D. 570					
Omayyad Dynasty						
Hegira	A.D. 622					
Chosroes (Persian king) died	628					
Mecca taken	632					
Muhammad died	632					
Abu Bekr	632–634					
Yezdegird (Persian king) defeated by Arabs	637					
Omar	634–643					
Uthman	643–655	Tueis, Adalal, Hit				
Ali	655–660					
Muawiya I	660–679					
Yezid I	679–683					
Muawiya II	683–683					
Merwan I	683–684					
Abdu'l Malik	684–705	Saib Khater, Nashet				
Walid I	705–715	Omar bin Daud	Moors landed in Spain	A.D. 710		
Suleiman	715–717	Mabed, Jamila	Fall of Cordova and Toledo	711		
Omar II	717–720	Ibn Suraij, Izato-l-Mila	Tarik, Musa		Pelayo	718–737
Yezid II	720–724	Ibn Mosajeh, Selma, Al-Garid	Theodomir the Visigoth			
Hashim	724–743	Ibn Mohris, Raika, Salema, Rabi'a	Moors defeated at Poitiers	732	Favila	737–739
Walid II	743–744	Malik, Khalida, Akila, Al-Bokhtori			Alfonso I of Leon	739–757
Yezid III	744–744	Yunus Al-Katib, Mukharrik				
Ibrahim	744–744	Ibrahim Al-Mosuli (742–803)				
Merwan II	744–750	Aluya, Takaf, Zelzel	Abdu'r-Rahman I	756–788		
Abbasid Dynasty						
Abu'l Abbas As-Saffah	750–754					
Al-Mansur	754–775					
Al-Mahdi	775–785	Ishak Al-Mosuli (767–849)				
Al-Hadi	785–786	Ziryab, Zorzor, Atika, Bedle	Hisham I	788–796		
Harun-al-Rashid	786–809	Ibn Jami, Oraib, Sheria	Al-Hakam I	796–822	Alfonso II	792–842

Al-Amin	809–812	Muteyyam, Dananir			
Al-Mamun	812–833	Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi	Abdu'r-Rahman II	822–852	
Al-Mu'tasim Billah	833–842	Ibn Khordaba, Al-Jahidh			
Al-Wathik	842–847	Ibn Al-Mu'taz, Amer bin Bana			Ramiro I 842–850
Al-Mutakkil	847–861	Felih bin Abi'l-Aura	Muhammad I	852–886	Ordoño I 850–866
Al-Mustansir Billah	861–862	Al-Kindi, Ash-Shaybani	(Moslems strong in Spain. Warfare almost constant between Christians and Moslems.)		Alfonso III 866–914
Al-Mustain Billah	862–866	Ibn Muqaffah, Al-Farabi			
Al-Mutaz Billah	866–869				
Al-Mu'tamid	870–892				
Al-Mutazid Billah	892–902	Al-Isfahani (897–966)	Al-Mundhir	886–888	
Al-Muktafi Billah	902–908	Al-Masudi, Tabari	Abd-Allah	888–912	
Al-Muktadir Billah	908–932	Mocadem of Cabra	Abdu'r-Rahman III	912–961	Ordoño II 913–923
		Ubayda, Ibn Al-Kutya			Fruela 923–924
		Adabi, Jahta, Blind Man of Tudela			Ramiro II 931–950
Fatimite Dynasty in Egypt		Blind Man's Staff	Al-Hakam II	961–976	Sancho I, "The Fat" 955–967
	A.D. 969–1171	Ibn Hayan, Abli	Hisham II	976–1009	Ramiro III 967–982
		Ibn Abdi Rabbihi	Yakub Al-Mansur		Alfonso V 999–1027
		Ibn Labanna	Abd-al-Malik		Bermudo III 1027–1037
		Ibn Said, Abu Amer	Muhammad II	1009	Garcia 1028
		Ibn Shakir, Al-Haitam	Suleiman	1009–1010	Fernando I 1027–1065
		Abu Bekr, Abu Uthman	Hisham II (again)	1010–1013	
		Akhtal bin Nomara	Suleiman (again)	1013–1016	
		Ibn Sida, Ibn Abdon	Ali bin Hammud	1016–1018	
		Abdu-l-lah bin Moslema	Abdu'r-Rahman IV	1018–1019	
		Ibn Adhdhari	Al-Kasim bin Hammud	1019–1023	
		Ibn Al-Abar, Gharbib	Abdu'r-Rahman V	1023–1024	Sancho of Navarre died 1035
		Al-Ghazali	Muhammad III	1024–1025	
		Ibn Bajja, Ibn Khallikan	Yahia bin Ali-Hammud	1025–1027	
			Hisham III	1027–1031	Sancho II 1065–1072
First Crusade	1095	Ibn Zuhr	(End of Caliphate)		Alfonso VI 1065–1109
					Alfonso VII 1126–1157
					Sancho III 1157–1158
		Ibn Rushd (1126–1198)			Alfonso VIII 1158–1214
					Alfonso IX 1188–1230
Saladin	1174–1193				Enrico I 1214–1217
Third Crusade	1192				Fernando III 1217–1252
		Ibn Khaldun	Yakub Al-Mansur		Alfonso X, "The Wise" 1252–1284
		Al-Makkari			

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

About ten years ago I began a study of the metrics of the lyric poetry of the Spanish Moors as the basis of my entry into the Royal Academy of Spain, and as a result of this investigation I realized that the Moslems of Andalusia invented an exceedingly clever strophic form which was different from the classic Arabic forms. Many of the poems written in this style, with their artistic rhythms, naturalness, brilliancy, and charm, spread throughout the Peninsula, North Africa, and the Orient. They were also imitated by the Provençal troubadours, the German Minnesingers, and other European poets.

In investigating the diffusion of this popular rhythm in the Christian districts of Spain, I had to read a multitude of Christian Spanish *cancioneros* or song-books, which showed plainly that this kind of tradition was very vigorous. The song-book which most excited my interest was the *Cancionero de Palacio de los siglos XV y XVI.*[1] There I found a great store of archaic and traditional poetry with the corresponding music in the notation of the period, some of the most popular having the same strophic and rhythmic patterns as those of the Andalusian Moors. The subject of one of these, No. 17, was a familiar poetic theme in Moslem Spain and shows Oriental influences. It was first known in the East, especially at Bagdad, the capital of the Caliphate in the days of Harun-al-Rashid. When I discovered that it had passed over into Christian Spanish literature, I questioned whether, since the words of this song had survived the difficulties of translation and still kept their artistic mold, the tune might not also have been kept, for music is easily understood and transmitted. Out of amusement and curiosity I sang over the melody as given in the *Cancionero,* without the least intention of going into musical investigations, for I am not a professional musician, nor a student of musical history. One point of correspondence surprised me. The words and music were symmetrically joined, for each verse had its accompanying pattern of phrase, so that there was artistic parity between the two. This could not be attributed to coincidence

[1] Published by F. A. Barbieri, Madrid, 1890.

alone, but to the fact that music and words were forged in the same mold. There were also strong evidences that the music as well as the poetry was Arabic in origin.

Curiosity moved me to acquaint myself with previous studies in the line of Moslem music; I found that serious investigations had been made, but that no authentic Arabic melody had been discovered that could with assurance be placed much earlier than the nineteenth century. In order to prove that the melody in question was Arabic, it would be necessary to have a copy of the music some centuries old. As it had been written down by European musicians of the sixteenth century, its interpretation was reasonably certain. Consequently it seemed worth while to undertake an analysis of the whole *Cancionero de Palacio*, in the hope that it might perhaps contain other Arabic songs, since it was written at a time when the whole Peninsula was overflowing with Spanish Moslems, the Moriscos. In the course of this analysis I discovered several versions of that same melody, No. 17, set to Castilian words of various kinds and of great popularity. Certain technicalities which I shall explain later convinced me that this tune was Arabic. I found many songs with the same musical structure and elements, and others colored by the thematic material of No. 17. All this assured me that this song was not alone of its kind, but that the music of the Andalusian Moors had possessed vitality enough to filter into Christian Spain and there become an important element in Christian Spanish folk-music.

I chose, on the strictest criteria available, forty or fifty songs, all obviously belonging to the same epoch and type. My curiosity grew incessantly, and the horizon of my plan of study widened until it covered not only Oriental music but medieval and modern European music as well. At last I began to realize that the melodies in the *Cancionero de Palacio* were Arabic and that they had grown popular in the Peninsula and had spread all over Europe. Therefore there might be a definite interest in publishing these investigations.

Seven years passed in almost constant dedication to the task of preparing myself to write a book on the origins of popular Spanish and European music. Then one day, in Mariano Soriano Fuertes' *Historia de la música española desde la venida de los Fenicios hasta el año 1850* (Madrid, 1885), I read about a song said to be one of

the *Cantigas* of Alfonso the Wise. As this tune was similar to those I had studied in the *Cancionero de Palacio,* I felt obliged to verify the quotation by turning to the original manuscripts of the *Cantigas.* I had had no intention of touching on these, for the best musical authorities stated as a proved fact that they were religious music, similar to *plain song,* and very different from the object of my investigations. However, in order to study the *Cantigas* more conveniently, I had photographic copies made of all those in the Toledo Codex of the National Library in Madrid, but neither in these nor in the Escorial codices could I find this melody. The historian had made a mistake, but I am most grateful for his slip as, once in possession of the copy of the *Cantigas,* I fell to amusing myself by studying them with care.

The study of the *Cantigas* as well as of the medieval European song-books has been undertaken by various musicologists, native and foreign. They have attacked it with enthusiasm again and again in the hope of breaking open the lock, but this has seemed impossible, and the efforts at interpretation have not been crowned with success. As the mysterious door in the *Arabian Nights* which could not be forced responded to the simple formula "Open Sesame!" so, almost without difficulty, did this open to me. But as long as the *Cantigas* were studied with the idea of church tonalities in mind, the sphinx remained shrouded in mystery.

I remembered that the *Cantigas* had been copied and perhaps even composed in Seville, which at that time had been recently reconquered from the Moors; also that Moslem Seville had been, for some time before that, one of the centers of musical culture in the whole world, if not the principal one. Alfonso the Wise kept many Moorish friends at his court, some of whom had translated a large part of the Islamic *Encyclopedia,* and others who were musicians, for this king was an enthusiast about Arabic culture. Then I began to suspect that this music might be Arabic. Following this hypothesis, I tried on the *Cantigas* the principles proved on the forty or fifty Arabic tunes of the *Cancionero de Palacio,* and this provided the talisman that opened the mysterious door. Every single *cantiga* responded to the test, thus showing that they were the instrumental and vocal compositions of the Moors who were the professionals at

Alfonso's court. They had been preserved in the notation of the thirteenth century, a curious and admirable example of the musical culture of the medieval Spanish people.

The work which I propose to write next, about the forty or fifty Arabic melodies in the *Cancionero de Palacio*, must follow this on the *Cantigas*, which should not appear as a mere incident or appendix, because, although last in the order of investigation, these are first in order of time and importance.

The Royal Spanish Academy, wishing to complete the splendid edition of the words of the *Cantigas* done at their order and expense by the Marquis of Valmar, has decided to publish the present study of the music, which is surely the key to the verse forms. My idea had been to publish only the *Cantigas* in the Toledo manuscript of the National Library, because this was the more archaic and contained the nucleus of Alfonso's work. He, following Harun-al-Rashid's example, had ordered a collection of one hundred chosen songs; and these make up that manuscript. When I disclosed this project to the Royal Academy they definitely wished me to complete the work with the publication of the Escorial manuscript J.b.2, the one containing the greatest number of songs. Following this suggestion I put into modern notation the 128 songs of the Madrid manuscript and 167 of the J.b.2, omitting only those that seemed to me to be repetitions or variants of the same themes, melodies lacking in new interest, as might a student's exercises. In all, this made 295 songs. The quality of the material, different from my ordinary studies, and the complexity of the technical details have hampered my work at times. However, I have always felt that, in addition to the pleasure that comes from executing such charming and artistic music, the discoveries which I have been fortunate enough to make would indicate new and fertile paths for study in the history of Spanish and European music. These discoveries are as follows:

1. The music of the medieval Mussulman artists has remained almost unknown until the present, and it has therefore been supposed that it was lost. The investigations into present-day North African and Asian music do not reveal it. But the *Cantigas* is a splendid collection of Arabic music, vocal and instrumental, in per-

Early Spanish musicians, from a leaf of the Escorial manuscript, J.b.2, perhaps a performance of *Las Cantigas*

fect preservation, as it was known in the thirteenth century, before the real decadence had set in.

2. The beginning and development of both erudite and popular Spanish music were unknown. Even the best-informed historians, like Mitjana, confessed their ignorance of the progress of music in the Peninsula, or at most ventured the hypothesis that perhaps it had preceded that of the other countries of Europe. Count Morphy affirmed that modern Spanish folk-music had nothing in common with that of the Middle Ages.[2] On this basis, most modern Spanish musicologists, especially those of the north, deny as a heinous thing any Andalusian influence. They seek origins for their modern music, *jota*, *zortzico*, *muiñeira*, and so forth, in modern European music or in the music of obscure nations such as the ancient Celts.

Melodies that are the originals of practically all of the types now considered indigenous to the different regions of Spain may be found in the *Cantigas;* hence it is clear that popular tradition has been uninterrupted for many centuries. Thus Spain, whose medieval music has been so little known, really possessed the richest collection of popular music, written down in the thirteenth century, of any country in the world. The music now held to be regional all came from a common origin, created in a truly Spanish system, the product of Andalusian genius. In the *Cantigas* will be found the present-day types, not only from southern Spain, but also from Aragon and Galicia, as well as the types of melodies preserved today among the nations that speak Spanish—*habaneras* and other American dances, and even European music formerly influenced by that of Spain.

3. There is much discussion over the attempts to interpret the manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially those of the troubadours. Scholars will find in the *Cantigas* a collection which, because of its richness and homogeneity, lends itself better

[2] In speaking of the book of Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz of 1677, Morphy, in his *Les Luthistes espagnols du XVI^e siècle* (Leipzig, 1902), page xxii, says: "It contains all the popular Spanish dances of that time, *pavanes, gaillardes, chaconnes, sarabandes,* etc., which have disappeared to give place to the *boleros, jotas, seguidillas,* etc., etc. *These evidently did not exist then, and must have been born in Spain under the influence of Italian music* [italics mine], for there is no similarity between these and the earlier ones, unless it might be the *gaita* of Ribayaz, which is still popular in Galicia."

than any other to establishing the true method of interpretation for this music, and I hope that they will be enabled thereby to avoid the pitfalls found in medieval manuscripts of secular music.

4. During the Middle Ages most of the countries of Europe were penetrated by a mysterious phantom unexplained by the scholars, a music which filtered into all parts without showing its warrant of nativity. It was so different from other European art that it has not as yet been clearly understood. It was called *ficta* by the European artists of the time. In the *Cantigas* this is found without disguises of any kind, and showing all the qualities which have been enigmas to every scholar, even the so-called *diabolus in musica*. By means of this revelation of *musica ficta*, as it was scornfully called, the obscurity of centuries disappears, and with it many errors and ill-founded explanations. There is a deep-rooted opinion among scholars that harmony, the major and minor modes, modulation, and so forth, belong exclusively to modern European music; but here in Spain, in the *Cantigas*, all of these elements appear in the thirteenth century, with indications that they come from still older civilizations.

5. Various historians of music have affirmed that all melody previous to the sixteenth century was incapable of giving aesthetic impressions to those accustomed to modern music. But here we find, in the intelligible notation of the time, music which in its perfection shows a very ancient secular form. And in spite of its age and simplicity, it may be heard with real pleasure and emotion if performed as it must have been in its own day. This would be explained by the fact that Moslem art was derived from Persian and Byzantine art, and was thus the heritor of Athens and Rome. So it is quite possible that Arabic art held fragments of Greek melody, and the Greeks knew how to create beauty in all their arts. I cherish the hope that through this ancient music of the *Cantigas*, an idea of classic art—usually considered hopelessly lost—may be approximated. Perhaps even plain song, whose classic traditions were ill understood during the Middle Ages, may be found to have finer technical elements than have so far been recognized.

The artistic Spain of olden times thus becomes the central bond which ties ancient art to modern. The great musicians of Andalusia

knew not only how to preserve their inherited art but also how to transform and renovate it by creating a popular form through which their compositions were broadcast, thus spreading all over Europe. There it still lives because the people have loved it and adopted it. Europe therefore owes a debt of gratitude to the Andalusian Moors, who maintained and passed on a rich fund of music, a perennial spring to which all European composers have come to renew their inspiration, but without seeking its unknown sources.

MUSIC IN ANCIENT ARABIA AND SPAIN

CHAPTER I · DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE ART OF MUSIC :: IGNORANCE OF THE MUSIC OF THE ANCIENTS :: LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF MEDIEVAL ARABIC MUSIC

Said Adrian de la Fage: "What an accumulation of difficulties, what obscurity reigns in the history of music! How many points remain unexplained! .... The proof of this is our almost complete ignorance of the ancient school of Spanish music before Palestrina." (See JUAN F. RIAÑO, *Notes on Early Spanish Music*, page 1.)

MUSIC is an art which at first sight seems so mysterious that even those who are fond of it hesitate to study the technical elements of its structure. For many it is an intellectually inexplicable art; for its substance is so vague that it eludes analysis. In the past mystic theories have preponderated among writers on music and professional musicians; and some philosophers have thought that music is the sonorous image either of passion or of ideas. Schopenhauer, in whom various great modern composers have sought their inspiration, reached the conclusion that music expresses truths beyond all material reality, and Wagner condensed all this musical mysticism, saying: "Here discursive and analytic reason holds no place. Music belongs in the category of the sublime; it rouses the supreme ecstasy of the consciousness of the Infinite. The musician suddenly perceives abstract ideas, then projects them in original forms, thus revealing himself to the world."[1]

These beliefs are due to the ethereal character of music and to the means of its transmission. In most other arts the materials are formed into visible material objects, such as a temple or a picture or a statue. All the world may witness the building of a palace or a cathedral, and may inform themselves about the workers, the materials, and the mechanical processes involved, and as to how the construction proceeds. These buildings stand for years or even centuries, and from them and from the fragments collected in museums

[1] See also J. Combarieu, *Histoire de la musique, des origines á la mort de Beethoven* (Armand Colin, Paris, 1913), pages 693 to 694.

the architectural history of the principal civilizations may easily be investigated. Approximately the same is true of painting and sculpture; but not of music, even of that composed since the introduction of notation, which in itself implies a fixed structure.[2]

The musician's work is carried on within his spirit, so that he himself hardly knows whence come his afflatus or his models, and it is as if his composition grew from nothing, within his soul. A musical composition lives only during its execution, and when the last echo has died no trace is left in space. Thus its existence is dependent on repetition, and, like the flying meteor, it never affords time for peaceful analysis. Moreover music makes its impressions consecutively, note after note, without complete unity at any one moment, so that combinations of musical sounds are more difficult to remember than are the visual images of such an art as painting. Music is apt to produce a more vivid emotion than the other arts, and although it should, on account of its fleeting and elusive nature, receive the most sensitive analysis, it finds us with minds swayed by emotion and therefore incapable of cool judgment. This reaction inclines us to believe that it is the emotion which should be understandingly appreciated. As it is difficult for the listener, in the fleeting moment of performance, to analyze and compare the artistic elements of a composition, it is easy to understand why so many are stirred by music and so few are capable of explaining even its simplest structure.

For its existence music needs not only a composer, but an interpreter as well. Moreover it is precisely this performer, persuaded of his importance, and imagining, naturally enough, that it is through his intervention that the artistic production is re-created, who oftenest insists on his rights. He dares compete with the composer, even to the point of dispossessing the latter of his work, and ends by developing the idea that the composition is the possession of and original with the one who transmits it. As is well recognized, a song travels with the speed of a swallow, migrating from city to city, from nation to nation, all over the world. This very mobility makes it difficult to follow its track, and, once lost, the memory of

[2] Notation is only a dead image of the living work of art: a medium making it possible to perform a composition without memorizing it.

the author is lost, as well as the time and place of composition, making it possible for anyone to claim authorship with impunity. Historically we find the following phenomenon: A town in which a certain tune starts abandons and forgets it, weary of repeating and hearing it, for even the best song may become tedious if heard too often, especially if executed by poor performers. Meanwhile the inhabitants of far countries to which the melody has traveled repeat it with delight, preserving it in all its purity, until they grow fond of it and end by believing it their own. Thus the art which of necessity maintains itself by repetition is the one in which we are most apt to let anyone appropriate the original inspiration, and in which plagiarism can be most easily concealed.

It is a singular fact that, though in all other arts there remain authentic monuments of great age, antedating by many centuries the didactic and technical treatises, in music there are technical treatises thousands of years old, while intelligible musical notation dates only from very recent times. The study of these ancient treatises can only expound abstract ideas, in themselves incapable of suggesting a single melody which can be accurately interpreted.[3] Before the invention of musical notation, which was unknown even to the most highly civilized races of antiquity, the history of this art does not offer material available for study, and the investigator necessarily finds gaps centuries long and peoples among whom he cannot trace a single authentic melody antedating the nineteenth century.

Europe is the only part of the world where scrupulous care has ever been taken in recording music by notation, and this has been done only in almost modern times. Former graphic systems were so imperfect that they barely served to sustain the memory through a work already known, so that one who had never heard or learned a composition could not reproduce it in its integrity by means of notation alone. Neither the Romanic or Byzantine neumes of the Middle Ages nor the alphabetical letters which some ancient peoples used to represent musical sounds[4] were clear symbols, and the very

[3] Riemann, *Handbuch*, I, Part I, page 7: "We know only theoretically about the ancient execution of music."

[4] The Greeks, Chinese, and East Indians used the letters of the alphabet for musical notation; but it appears that this was exclusively for didactic use and not

races and social classes who invented them have forgotten the key to their understanding.[5] Not until the five-line staff with its clefs was created could graphic representation be made approximately exact.

The history of music is even now found to be in its infancy. A musical historian may perhaps follow a melody through two, three, or four generations of musicians, possibly two or three centuries; beyond that he gropes in ever thickening obscurity. The theoretic treatises of some ancient peoples have been investigated in an effort to understand the nature of early music, but historians have in the past neglected the study of Egyptian, Babylonian, Chinese, and Indian music, which remain unknown in theory and practice, although it was undoubtedly in these countries that the earliest periods in the evolution of the art had their being. But these students cannot forego touching on Greek music, although only a few tiny fragments remain, in obscure notation and of relatively modern times (as they date from the second or third century A.D.).[6] The Greek treatises appear to inform us about everything, but for lack of corroborative material they have contributed to our false and misleading ideas.[7]

for the purposes of execution. The Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Syrians, and so forth, do not seem to have used any notation. See David and Lussy, *Histoire de la notation musicale* (Paris, 1882), pages 2 ff.

The manuscripts written in neumes which have been preserved date from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. Square-headed notes appear in the ninth century.

[5] No Indian musicians are capable nowadays of deciphering their antique notation. "The present-day Indians have no real system of musical notation," said Parsons in 1861. See David and Lussy, as above. Even Gregorian music, which is the richest and has the most primitive form, has been only partially reconstructed, although endless erudition has been lavished on it. See A. Dechevrens, *Études de science musicale* (Paris, 1898), I, page 70. In the fourteenth century the white notation (or open-faced note) made its appearance, the precursor of our present notation. (David and Lussy, *op. cit.*, page 110.) The previous notation of popular music, made from elements of ecclesiastical notation, has not been properly understood; for this reason, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are practically prehistoric in this branch.

[6] Dechevrens, *Études de science musicale*, page 303.

[7] The characteristics of Greek music have been much discussed, and there have been many disputes respecting the existence or non-existence of harmony, so that some of the most discreet musicologists have come to doubt the artistic value of this

Our ignorance, therefore, of the origin of ancient music, and of its evolution even in historical times, gives us no basis for judgment. But the students, not finding criteria in musical history, have borrowed methods of study from the other arts, and have accepted hypotheses that lack foundation. We shall expose some of the commonest of these in the course of our investigations.

Our lack of knowledge of the beginnings of European folk-music and the difficulty of distinguishing between composer and transmitter has occasioned the crass error of believing that music emanates from the people. As all the world sings melodies whose origins are unknown, altering them at pleasure, it is easy to believe that anyone can make a song. Even composers, who should know the difficulties of composition, fall into this error. "Music is an essentially popular art," says our noted Pedrell,[8] "the one which the populace understands and prefers, the only one which, by instinct and genius, and not merely by labor, they have made their own."[9] Such statements disregard the evolution of melody.

The point of view of preferring one's own locality is another inveterate prejudice of the historians of European music, and tends to reinforce the false belief that music is an art of the people. Rie-

music. For example, the following paragraph in David and Lussy's *Histoire de la notation musicale*, page 36: "We distrust the tales about the surprising effects produced by this music [Greek], ... we do not believe in the transports of enthusiasm nor in the excesses of fury which it awakened, nor in the sense of calm and well-being which came with a change of mode, etc. .... The Greeks, although notable in other artistic activities, were musically the most sorry of all the peoples of antiquity."

It is inconceivable that the Greeks should, as is generally accepted, have used the diatonic scale and complicated stringed instruments and organs and not have understood harmony. Still, it passes for a historical fact that the Greeks, Romans, and Orientals of ancient times did not employ harmony in their music. Certain pedagogical writers of the Middle Ages have led us to believe that the rhythmic measure of that time "was ternary only," because the binary had been eliminated as imperfect. David and Lussy (*ibid.*, page 188), like other wise historians, believed this "inexplicable curiosity" (as they called it) to be the truth. But if so inexplicable and so curious, why concede it?

[8] See his *Cancionero popular español*, page 11.

[9] See also Camille Bellaigue and Coussemaker, *Chants populaires des Flamands de France*, Introduction, page xvii.

mann[10] considers it most difficult to estimate the influence exerted on European music by Asiatic civilizations, because the nexus of this possible influence has not been found. Nevertheless, most musical historians consider that present-day European music is derived from that of the native peoples who lived in Europe in the remotest times, in other words, the Celts, although in reality much less is known about Celtic music than about Asiatic.[11]

The execution of music ordinarily goes hand in hand with solemn ceremonies, or with the words of a song, or the movement of a dance, or the tapping or sounding of an instrument. Therefore, if these things are popular and traditional, one must suppose that this association is indissoluble and lasting, if one is to get a historical basis for action. Any people which, through thousands of years, has preserved its language, ceremonies, instruments, and ancient dances must also have composed the music which is used in the festivities and ceremonials. But in spite of the ancient documents belonging to European nations, and the notation which has come from the early Middle Ages, it has not been possible to settle definitely the part played by each country in the formation of European music. The history of this musical development rests wholly on something hitherto undeciphered, because the existing traces do not reveal its forms, elements, or origin.

It might appear that from the moment notation was adopted the history of music would begin to clarify, but this is not the case. It is well known that plain song was in use in Europe during the Middle Ages, but being neither chromatic nor mensurable, it cannot of itself explain the origins of chromatic and measured music. Those best informed who have studied medieval music agree that they can only be explained through the influence of some kind of music then

[10] *Handbuch*, I, Part I, page 6.

[11] When a sure criterion is lacking, contradictions and divergences are frequent. See Tiersot, in the *Revue des traditions populaires*, Volume IX, Anno IX, page 163.

D'Indy, in his *Cours de composition musical*, page 84, indicates that the populace does not create, but only makes adaptations, and that "popular melodies are interpretations of the liturgical monodies," affirming that "investigations have shown this result." To my mind, Inzenga's comment is the most discriminating (in his *Cantos y bayles*): "It is difficult to ascertain what primitive song really was and the epochs in which the transformations were carried out."

existent, which has been given the disparaging name of *musica ficta.* No country in Europe dares to claim its origin, for lack of sufficient title. But all the world considers itself justified in appropriating it, and has agreed to one of two things, in order to avoid disputes: either that each nation separately made its own *musica ficta,* or that all collectively created it. While this is a prudent way of avoiding trouble, it is not a rational proceeding for establishing a scientific truth. Anything, is the implication, rather than believe that both erudite and popular European music should have developed from another artistic medieval civilization whose music had reached its highest development—a civilization which preserved in this subject the highest scientific and artistic traditions of ancient classic times!

European musicologists derided Fétis when he asserted that Arabic music had influenced European, but Fétis' idea was really reasonable—the supposition that the system prevailing at the center of the then civilized world, immediately before the unfolding of European music, should have affected the birth and growth of the latter. Today, notwithstanding, the idea prevails that Europe never received a melody from Arabia. When referring to Spain, where the Moors sang and played for eight centuries without interruption, even the most distinguished Spanish musical writers do not weary of repeating: "Our music has absorbed no influence from the Arabs." Thus Pedrell, at various points in his works: "Those who admit it are mistaken. Spain owes nothing essential to the Arabs or Moors."[12] It is a strange thing that a type of music which exercised such power during the Middle Ages should be so little remembered that the mere possibility of its influence could be repudiated.

These affirmations show a deep-rooted and far-reaching disposition to deny the sway of Islam over medieval European civilizations. On this account lines of study in certain fruitful directions

[12] *Cancionero,* pages 69 and 84. Señor Pedrell finds some Orientalism existing in Spanish music, but traces it to the most ancient influences of the Byzantine civilization before the Arabic period. I do not know the documents used by Menéndez Pelayo when he says, in his *Antología* (I, page lxix): "Of the music of the Spanish Moors we know only the names of their instruments." Riaño says (*Notes,* page 6): "The problem before the modern scholar is the discovery of what Mozarabic music really was," and Rafael Mitjana affirms this: "Mozarabic music is unknown to us."

have been abandoned, and the best historical proofs have been discredited on one pretext or another, while any kind of hypothesis is admitted, if only it contradicts this Moslem influence.

For my part, I am almost pleased at the existence of this prejudice against Arabic music, for it necessitates most scrupulous care on my part in giving historical sources and in examining artistic forms. I shall endeavor to document every historical statement; but I shall also reserve the right not to accept any unendorsed contrary statements. I shall submit the artistic elements of music to an intellectual analysis and shall leave aside all extraneous matter which might be misleading, such as its passing association with other arts, except poetry, which, in its combination with music, determines the musical pattern, and this is what we shall principally study. As none of the technical laws of any art can explain the mysteries of aesthetic emotion, we shall endeavor not to penetrate into these sublime regions. Aesthetic pleasure should increase the intellectual satisfaction felt in studying all the parts of an artistic work, if one can prevent one's self from being seduced by emotion. A melody should be executed a hundred or a thousand times, if necessary, to bring about a calmness of judgment. We should submit the executants and copyists whom we encounter in the course of our investigations to an impartial examination of their personal make-up, without letting ourselves be dazzled by artistic ostentation. Preferably we shall look for those who are modest and sincere and who preserve faithfully the integrity of the music. We shall try to draw a distinction between originality in composers and vanity at their own virtuosity in performers. Finally, we shall endeavor to treat our subject without exaggeration; and we shall not talk of styles without technical and concrete definitions, of characteristics without analyzing them, of schools without explanations, of the typically personal without accuracy, or of originality and inspiration without an understanding of their elements; and we shall not boldly establish principles which cannot be maintained. It is only in this way that we can hope to contribute to the advance of musical studies.

Let us begin by an investigation as to whether or not Arabic music has been preserved.

CHAPTER II · INVESTIGATIONS INTO ARABIC MUSIC :: METHODS AND CRITERIA USED IN DETERMINING ITS STRUCTURE :: RESULTS OBTAINED

IN THEIR *Histoire de la notation musicale* David and Lussy say in regard to India: "One cannot judge of its ancient music from that of the present day."[1] This is a discreet statement and contains a wise rule, which, if followed, would have avoided many misapprehensions among those studying ancient Arabic music. Dr. Perron says: "The past of musical art is lost in the Orient. Nowadays not even well-educated Arabs understand the technical terms which appear repeatedly in the treatises of music. I have not discovered a single Mussulman who knew the meaning of the technicalities in the great song-book, *Kitabo-l-Agani,* or *Libro de los Cantares,* in which are specified the various kinds of composition often cited in its pages."[2]

It is well known that during the Middle Ages there was an extraordinary flowering of the art of music in Moslem countries, but, as none of these had any musical notation, we have no way of reconstituting their melodies. European musicologists, nevertheless, have undertaken the study of the Arabic music of today with the idea of tracing that of the Middle Ages. The results have only increased the misunderstanding, for most of these musicians have not been Arabic scholars, capable of comparing their results with the books written by contemporaneous witnesses. Meanwhile the Arabic scholars in Europe, capable of translating any of these works, were not musical specialists, so that, instead of correcting the statements of non-Arabists, they have accepted them as true.[3]

[1] Page 7.

[2] In his work *Femmes arabes depuis l'islamisme,* chapter xx. See also Salvador-Daniel, *La Musique arabe,* footnotes, pages 4 and 5.

[3] There are a few exceptions, as, for example, J. P. N. Land in his *Recherches sur l'histoire de la gamme arabe.* This discreet Arabist and musician has never re-

Villoteau, although an intelligent musicologist and sagacious observer, was so imbued with the deeply rooted European ideas of localism[4] that he thought that, because the Pyramids still stand on the banks of the Nile, the music of past times must also have been preserved, and that the songs of the sailors and water-carriers of the Nile surely date from primitive Egyptian civilization, with a thousand years of background; and he applied the same standard to Arabic music.[5] This same bias has influenced most of the investigators: Salvador-Daniel, Christianowitsch, and Rouanet[6] have studied the music of northern Africa, thinking they had found the genuine tradition of the great days of medieval Arabic music.

All of them encountered artists of a type described by Villoteau, who speaks of them as ignorant and vain professionals, seeking novelty in extravagance, caprice, and excessive adornment, which utterly destroy the original melody. They try to excel by their execution rather than by legitimate effects, preferring notoriety to real merit.[7] Other investigators give similar descriptions of Moslem musicians

ceived the recognition he deserves for having settled certain truths that conflicted with current errors. He holds (page 74) that in Arabic music the diatonic scale, our major mode, was considered as the normal one. Most writers on Arabic music have judged its chromatics inconsistent with third and quarter tones. Salvador-Daniel did not acquaint himself sufficiently with the history of Arabic music. On this account he has made some rather ridiculous misstatements, such as that Al-Farabi studied in the schools founded in Cordova by the caliphs toward the end of the ninth century. Christianowitsch was completely ignorant of the history of Moorish civilization. Dechevrens, in his *Études* (Appendix IV), treats especially of Arabic music, although he has made no direct investigations.

[4] Tiersot (*Histoire*, page 347) believes that popular art is static, that the Chinese have kept their songs for thirty-one centuries, and that the Moslem countries must have done likewise.

[5] Villoteau, *De l'état actuel de l'art musical en Egypte.*

[6] Daniel implies that Algerian music is the antique music of the Arabs (*La Musique arabe*, page 1), while Christianowitsch believes all music found in northern Africa to be ancient, and from the Arabian peninsula itself. See his *Esquisse historique.* Rouanet says in the *Répertoire* de Yafil: "These melodies are sung now, but their origin goes far back; they are the melodies of the caliphs, although called music of Granada and Andalusia." This music has remained unchanged since the seventh century.

[7] See Villoteau, *op. cit.*, pages 612 to 613, 695, etc.

of the present day.[8] At various times Villoteau attempted to inquire into the technical training among Egyptian musicians, but he never obtained positive answers, and was persuaded that they "had never thought about such things."[9] The Ethiopian priests themselves, ignorant of musical principles, had nothing to say when questioned about scales, modes, and tones.[10] The Moors of northern Africa made Christianowitsch believe that they were singing ancient Arabic melodies,[11] while the natives told Rouanet that a song whose words spoke of the lamentations of Potiphar's wife over her love for Joseph was ancient.[12] This he did not believe, but he does credit, as historical, testimony as to the authenticity of a song which should have been based on proofs going back over a thousand years, but which actually does not cover more than three generations. Rouanet[13] recognizes that the songs which he published, even the popular ones, are performed with so many disfigurements as to become completely unrecognizable. Evidence of this nature is open to challenge as historical proof. How are we to trust artists who alter melodies by caprice or through vanity, and are entirely ignorant of technical discipline and of the history of their art, and who never execute a melody twice alike?[14]

The type of music now performed in the Moslem countries may be conjectured by the emotions which it causes. Villoteau describes sincerely the effect of Egyptian music on himself: "Accustomed since early youth to the best works of our composers, I had to tolerate music that rent my ears with its eccentric modulations and ornaments executed by harsh nasal voices, accompanied by instruments

[8] D. J. Parisot records, in his *Rapport sur une mission scientifique en Turquie d'Asie*, that the Maronite, Chaldean, and Syrian music which he would have liked to collect was very difficult to note down, as even the best singers were inaccurate and would alter the song, each one in a different way, in the hope of excelling.

[9] Villoteau, *De l'état actuel de l'art musical en Egypte*, pages 668 to 669.

[10] *Ibid.*, page 742. See also pages 790 to 793. [11] *Esquisse historique*, page 4.

[12] *Répertoire* de Yafil, Part 10. [13] *Ibid.*, Part 15, page 4.

[14] Salvador-Daniel in *La Musique arabe*, page 18, speaks of the Kabyles as follows: "It is not unusual to find among neighboring tribes noticeable differences in the manner of singing a certain song, so that one may even lose sight of the original melodic formula among the changes that have taken place."

either penetrating and discordant, or feeble and muffled. Such were the first impressions." In speaking of Coptic music, Villoteau says: "If the Egyptian songs disturbed us, those of the Copts rasped us even more."[15] Salvador-Daniel had the same first impressions of both Algerian and Berber music.[16] Christianowitsch, the most enthusiastic investigator, even though a blind admirer of everything Arabic, confesses[17] that he found himself in the worst kind of humor after hearing the music in the Algerian cafés, asking himself: "Is this the Oriental music which the Arab historians tell us moved people to tears and laughter?"

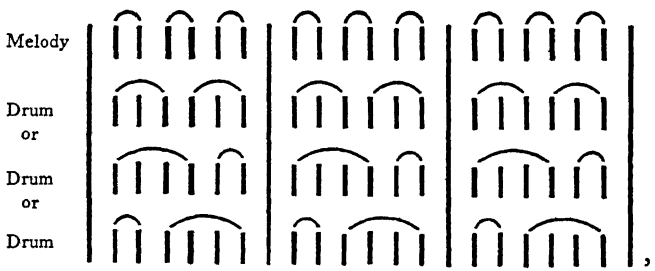
Salvador-Daniel and other travelers have discovered[18] that, as a result of tolerating the ill impressions caused by this music, they have grown to delight in it; but, as they do not explain their change in feeling, we must attribute it to callousness, resulting from constant friction, and not to any real merit in the music. What are the artistic elements which, when understood, produce this pleasant aesthetic emotion? Salvador-Daniel, carefully observing and analyzing Algerian music, says: "Listen to Arabic music; first one notices variants which embellish the tune, then instruments of percussion which seem to be in intentional opposition to the melody.[19] As the number of stanzas increases, the variants increase also, until

[15] *De l'état actuel de l'art musical en Egypte*, pages 669, 755, 756.

[16] *La Musique arabe*, page 100. See also Moulieras, *Le Maroc inconnu*, page 192, and Mitjana, *L'Orientalisme*, page 215.

[17] *Esquisse historique*, page 2. [18] *La Musique arabe*, pages 9 and 10.

[19] The rhythm of the melody will often be found to have a different pattern from that of the drum, as, for example,



See *La Musique arabe*, page 97.

the additions destroy the original."[20] Villoteau, Daniel, and Christianowitsch agreed concerning the confusion of modulations in the Egyptian songs and the multiplicity of adornments with which the tunes were overcharged.[21]

According to Christianowitsch[22] the best music, in the opinion of the Moslems, is the *nuba*,[23] a kind of potpourri whose elements have lost all their individual grace after being melted into a kind of amalgam. Thus, apparently, Arabic music has become so tangled rhythmically and so decadent melodically as to be merely an overgrown jumble of foolish ornaments.

Most of these writers have published the tunes eliminating the unnatural ornaments, and yet very little is left but unmingled adornment. They affirm that something seems real to them in all this purely negative statement, and Daniel thinks that Arabic music is founded on laws entirely distinct from those governing our system,[24]

[20] *La Musique arabe*, page 31.

[21] *De l'état actuel de l'art musical en Egypte*, page 670. See also *La Musique arabe*, page 38, and *Esquisse historique*, pages 2, 4, 5. The singers slur or trill all the intervals, either up or down, and make ritornelles at the ends of phrases interspersed with repetitions of the Arabic words "*ya aini, ya leili.*" Daniel speaks of hearing the phrase "*ya leili*" sung for more than half an hour. "*Ya aini*" means "my eyes."

[22] *Esquisse historique*, page 6.

[23] Most writers speak of the *nuba* as one of the principal forms of Arabic music, whose origin they do not attempt to determine. Christianowitsch (*Esquisse historique*, pages 7 and 8) describes it, using technical terms whose significance he undoubtedly does not understand. He is bold enough to say that it must have originated in Arabia and traveled thence to Spain. He believes the *nuba* to be the Oriental symphony, which alone has survived from the music of ancient times, in spite of neglect (page 9). He publishes seven *nubas* under the title of *Ancient Music* (page 33). According to him some people trace it to Turkey, others to the Spanish Moors; and he adds: "This latter opinion, which would lead to the belief that this style of music emanates from Spain, is inadmissible, because this nation, during the domination of the Moors, was in a state of complete savagery." (I quote this passage word for word to show the state of Christianowitsch's knowledge of Mussulman history.) By contrast, Yafil in his *Répertoire* (Part 22, page 4) mentions the "musicians of Granada, who speak of twenty-four *nubas* of which the Granadans can be proud." The description of the *nuba* will be found later.

[24] Even clearer are the words of Mitjana, who says in his *L'Orientalisme:* "Arabic music was never consistent and systematic in form."

and that one must adapt one's self to its modes, abandoning our ideas of tonality.[25] But these modes are ill-defined and therefore confusing.

Another characteristic attributed to Arabic music is the use of third and quarter tones, implying that the Arabic scale is richer than ours.[26] To suppose that any music described as poor in themes, monotonous, and confusedly unintelligible should have reached a degree of development involving the use of quarter tones is ridiculous. It would be a different matter if these were explained as mere discords, or as chromatic influences of a modulatory system whose secret is lost. But discords are the result of dullness, as is the loss of melodic structure; therefore the acceptance of this explanation implies lack of artistry in the music.

In reality the data given us on modern Arabic music leads us to believe, contrary to Dechevrens,[27] that it is not a primitive art, but one corrupted by pedants and performers incapable of realizing the importance of a truly artistic tradition. In the face of such decadence the most elementary prudence should make students hesitate in their affirmations regarding an art about which it is impossible to form an opinion from such examples. Nevertheless, investigators go on imputing to medieval Arabic music the vices it happens to have acquired from present-day contact with degenerate people. This is a grave error.[28]

[25] To show the difficulty which is found in determining the nature of this music, I shall quote from Parisot, who says in his *Rapport* (page 34): "The character and execution of Oriental music do not permit of an exact writing of certain pieces, nor of a definite fixing of the tonality. The addition or subtraction of an interval, the suppression of a final note, lead to a change of mode, which the Orientals accept more easily than we. The same tune is written in different scales."

One cannot use instruments like the piano and organ, as they do not adapt themselves to Arabian modes.

[26] Discussion of the various opinions on this subject would be protracted and of little value. We may abide by the results of Land's study of the Arabic scale, already referred to.

[27] This author says that Arabic music retains its primitive simplicity (*Études de science musicale,* Appendix 4).

[28] They find it hard to distinguish between traditional Arabic music and that which has come in through outside influences. Villoteau experienced this, finding

Evidently the men whose works we have been quoting have formulated the characteristics of Arabic art on the supposition that, because contemporaneous Asiatic and African musicians show themselves incapable of combining voices and instruments artistically, investigators are justified in saying that Oriental and Arabic music have always been in unison. Rouanet says: "European musicologists insist on imposing harmonic accompaniments on Eastern tunes which are absolutely contrary to the feeling and taste of the Orientals. .... It is childish to try to analyze harmonically melodies belonging to an art which does not permit of synchronous sounds. .... Harmony, that is, the science of simultaneous sounds, does not exist among the Arabs. The accompanying instruments play in unison."[29]

The investigators believe that one Oriental characteristic is a chromatic form independent of all harmonic modulation. This is stated without taking into consideration the judicious investigations of Land, in his *Recherches*, which show that the Oriental scale is

some Greek, Italian, and European melodies sung in Egypt, with many alterations. In Morocco and Algeria, European melodies may be heard so corrupted as to be barely recognizable. Mitjana in *L'Orientalisme*, pages 219, 220, 221, gives examples of this. Rouanet, in *Répertoire* de Yafil (Part 13, page 4), suspects a Turkish origin for some of these melodies, as the names are Turkish.

Personally I have had the experience of hearing the military band of the Sultan of Morocco play various pieces, one of them the Spanish Royal March. It was unrecognizable until someone well informed called my attention to it. If this number, almost as simple as a bugle call, could be obscured after so short a period of familiarity, how is it possible, merely by hearing what these people sing, to reconstitute what the Arab melodies of a thousand years ago might have been?

[29] *Répertoire*, Part 23, page 4. Since in Europe the corresponding notes of the different octaves are given the same name, the false notion has arisen that homonymous sounds are in unison. This is an equivocation, both etymologically and actually. See also Daniel, *La Musique arabe*, pages 4 and 38; Barbier de Meynard's article "Ibrahim fils de Mehdi," *Journal Asiatique*, March–April 1869, page 285; and Tripodo, *Lo Stato degli studii sulla musica degli arabi* (Rome, 1904), page 30.

Hugo Riemann, in his *Handbuch* (Volume I, Part I, page 5) says: "Ancient classic music has not the same elements as our modern music; it lacks the perfection of harmony." On page 6 he shows that the orchestra of antiquity was essentially unison. Later, in Volume II, he states that "our harmony is a Gothic invention and barbarous."

essentially diatonic, like the European. Another feature ascribed to Arabic art during the Middle Ages, because of inferences based on the study of the present, is the use of arabesques. Probably two things have contributed to this false induction: first, a study only of the decadent art, and, secondly, the geometric ornaments of Arabic architecture. Yafil says: "An excessive use of arabesques is one of the qualities of Arabic decorative art, consequently Oriental musicians have a predilection for multiplicity of ornament. Nowadays virtuosity measures itself by the caprice and richness of trills, appoggiaturas, mordents, scales, and flourishes which the singer introduces. Villoteau and Lane observed it in Egypt, Jones and Patterson in India, Bourgault-Ducoudray in Greece, and Pierre Aubry in Turkey and Armenia. In northern Africa we have observed the same passion for piling melismatic ornament both vocally and instrumentally, as the public will not applaud otherwise."[30]

All these affirmations in regard to medieval Arabic music rest entirely on present-day experience; and we must conclude that this boneless and nerveless amorphous mass, with ill-defined artistic elements, the rhythmic line lost in redundancies, and the rhythms and melodies in opposition, may be North African or Oriental racket, but not Arabic music. These errors result from an inversion of the logical method of making such an investigation, for, instead of explaining modern Oriental and African music by its own historical precedents, students have attempted to explain the past by the present. The inevitable consequence has been failure, which the real scholars admit, and from the work already done no definite statements can be made.[31]

How can we say that the elements of European music are different from those of the Arabic without knowing what these were? To say with assurance that the genuine idea of Arabic music is that of the modern African music might well close the door on later investigations. Would it not be better to open all the available avenues in the hope of stumbling upon the one that will lead us to the manifest

[30] *Répertoire*, Part 2, page 4.

[31] See *L'Orientalisme*, pages 184, 193, and *Lo Stato degli studii sulla musica degli arabi*, page 4.

truth? So, if we can prove to ourselves that ancient Islamic music possessed technical characteristics entirely apart from its modern counterpart, and was really far superior to that executed now by African and Oriental artists, and, moreover, if we can persuade ourselves that this earlier Arabic music was derived from the same classic sources as those from which European music comes, will not the barriers that have been raised between medieval Arabic music and contemporaneous European music fall to the ground?

We shall now endeavor to ascertain the true character of Arabic music.

CHAPTER III · ORIENTAL ARABIC MUSIC :: ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT :: SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS PREJUDICES AGAINST MUSICIANS :: THESE ARE FOREIGNERS :: PERSIAN AND BYZANTINE INFLUENCES :: PRIMITIVE SCHOOL OF SONG IN MECCA, MEDINA, AND WADI-AL-KURA

ARABIC music reached its greatest height during the eighth and ninth centuries; and the documents in regard to it which are still in existence are the work of such thorough musicians that they make a record unequaled perhaps by any European nation. One work alone, *The Book of Songs* of Al-Isfahani, is a veritable library in itself, describing in detail the origins, chronology, and wide diffusion of Arabic music, its artistic qualities, and the singers and musicians as well.[1] Let us take a swift glance at some of the items and anecdotes describing the qualities of this music, leaving aside those

[1] Translations from the Greek musical theorists and philosophers penetrated into Arabic literature and helped inspire Moslem writers like Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and the authors of the Arabic Encyclopedia, who were known as the Brotherhood of Purity or the Purity Brotherhood. There was even an Indian treatise, called *The Fruits of Knowledge.* (See *Thabakato-l-Omam* of the Spanish writer Ibn Said, pages 14, 22, 29, 52.) We have drawn from all of these texts, but principally from the *Book of Songs, Kitabo-l-Agani* (second Bulak edition), an incomparable book by an able man, Abu'l-Faraj Al-Isfahani (born 284 of the Hegira, died Bagdad in 356 or 357, hence 897 to 966 A.D.). He describes the scenes and the songs vividly and objectively, and often gives not only the names of the poet and the composer but also the type of song, its rhythm, and the fret to be used in the lute accompaniment; this according to the classic standards of Ishak Al-Mosuli (*Agani,* I, pages 1 and 2). In the Bulak edition the work fills twenty-one volumes, and Al-Isfahani used as his sources:

1. The work of Yunus Al-Katib, pupil of Ibn Suraij, Ibn Mohris, and Al-Garid. The author was a great artist and composer (*Agani,* VI, pages 113 to 116).

2. That of Yahia bin Marzuk of Mecca, composer, singer, and player, and teacher of Ibrahim Al-Mosuli. He was well informed about everything concerning ancient Arabic music (*Agani,* VI, pages 15 to 17).

3. That of his grandchild, Ahmed, who so surpassed his grandfather in con-

descriptions in which the writers pass on to us the varied emotions it caused. We shall try to follow the chronological order as we go (Isfahani's work is in dictionary form).

The Moslems themselves consider the pre-Islamic poetry of their race as most classic, but it does not appear to have been accompanied by music. The musical historians tell us that, until the death of Muhammad, Arabic songs were of so primitive a type that they did not even possess a rhythmical element, but were simply a kind of monotonous chanting with which the camel-drivers urged on their beasts during the desert voyages. Judging by the type of call now in use among primitive races when similarly engaged, we may well believe the historian's word, that it was without key, rhythm, or form, and that the later technical perfection of the camel-drivers' songs was due to foreigners.[2]

All the pre-Islamic singers using the Arabic tongue are spoken of as foreigners. For instance, the *Agani* (XVI, page 13) mentions

scientiousness that by his more profound investigations he was able to correct certain mistakes of the former (*Agani*, XV, pages 62 to 65).

4. A well-known and accredited work attributed to the celebrated Ishak Al-Mosuli (*Agani*, IV, page 3, and III, page 12).

5. The book of Amer bin Bana, historian of music and partisan of the modernist school of his time (*Agani*, XIV, page 50).

6. That of Ubaydu-l-lah bin Abdu-l-lah bin Tahir, a famous book, in praise of a highly esteemed system of musical composition (*Agani*, VIII, pages 42 and 43).

7. Other less important but useful works, such as the book of Ibn Khordaba, used by Al-Masudi (see *Prairies d'or*, text and translation by C. Barbier de Meynard and Panet de Courteille, Paris, 1861); that of Abdu-l-lah bin Motazz on the songs of Oraib and Sheria; that of Jahta about mandolin or *tombur* players; also the book about Bedle by Ali bin Hishem, the notebooks of Dananir in which this singer annotated her own repertory, etc., etc.

Barbier de Meynard, in his "Ibrahim," page 212, says that Hibato-l-lah, the son of Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi, collaborated with Isfahani.

[2] The Purity Brotherhood, page 87, say of the *hidé* that the camel-drivers use it on their journeys to enable the camels to move faster in the darkness of the night and not to feel the weight of their burdens. Al-Masudi (Arabic edition, Al-Makkari, Bulak, margins, III, page 371) describes the *hidé* as a primitive musical type, a monotonous sing-song which repeats the phrase, *Ye hedia, ye hedia, ye yeda, ye yeda.* Of the *nasab* he says that there were three varieties, the *rocbani*, the *sened*, and the *hezej allegro*. An anecdote in the *Agani* (III, page 84) leads one to infer that the *rochani* was not artistic. See Ibn Khaldun, Slane translation, II, pages 417 and 418.

ten women singers, five of whom were Byzantines and sang in Greek, accompanied by the *barbito* (an instrument of the lyre family). The other five sang songs from Alhira. Although we owe most of the early song-words to poets of Arab race and tongue, the music was composed and executed by foreign musicians. The explanation is that the title of poet was considered an honor, while to be a musician was considered demeaning. Moreover, these two arts were completely divorced during the earlier period of Islamic history. Among the Arabs, a deeply rooted prejudice showed itself in the prohibitions and sanctions of the Muhammadan religious law. "With rare unanimity the founders of the four orthodox rites, Abu Hanifa, Malik, Ibn Hanbal, and Ash-Shafei, condemned music and songs as an effeminate occupation, not fitting for virile characters, and a game and diversion unbecoming to religious and serious men." Abu Hanifa was so extreme as to compare the exercise of this art with infidelity, as a denial of religion.[3] As a result of his judgment the political authorities at various times prohibited singing and severely punished the singers.[4] All of this would indicate that if music reached a high state of culture among the Moslems, it was due to infiltrations from outside which overcame the moral obstacles hindering its introduction into Arab culture.

The first generation of Mussulman singers consisted of three artists, foreign libertines, named Tueis, Adalal, and Hit.[5] Of Adalal it is told that he was a mediocre artist of limited repertory and faculties, a baritone who accompanied himself on the tambourine or timbrel. Two compositions of his are cited, a *takil* and a *hezej*.[6]

[3] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya*, II, page 182.

[4] There are various cases of this social disqualification of singers, for even in Harun-al-Rashid's time it was considered bad form for a judge of Bagdad to hold a conversation with Ibn Jami, one of the most distinguished musicians of the royal chapel (*Agani*, VI, page 67).

[5] They scandalized the simple people of Medina with their levities to such an extent that the political authorities, including the caliph himself, determined that all three should suffer castration, not for the benefit of their voices, but to avoid the scandal of their immoralities. The name Hit is sometimes spelled Himb. (See *Agani*, IV, page 39; VII, page 128.)

[6] *Agani*, IV, page 39. For explanation of these types of song see below, pages 79–80.

The most celebrated of these three was Tueis, whose name is the diminutive form of the Arabic word meaning "royal peacock." He was born at the time of Muhammad's death, and is said to have been the one to introduce rhythm into Arabic music. He was unable to play on the lute, so he accompanied himself only with the tambourine, a fact that makes us suspect that his songs were not complex. His first song was a *hezej,* and he composed in this rhythm and that of the *ramel.*

But the artists who most furthered the progress of the new school were Saib Khater and Nashet, two slaves belonging to one master. The first knew Arab songs and accompanied himself on the traditional tambourine, while the second sang Persian songs, playing his own accompaniments on the lute. This in time became the classic instrument. As the Persian songs of Nashet created greater enthusiasm than Arab songs, Saib Khater hastened to learn them, and even set Arabic words to the Persian tunes of Nashet. The latter was the teacher of Ibn Suraij and Mabed, as well as the women singers, Jamila and Izato-l-Mila, all celebrated; so it goes without saying that Persian music, artistic in its conception, spread from that time on among the most renowned Arab musicians.[7]

But without doubt, the singer who introduced the greatest number of new melodies was the famous Ibn Mosajeh. In Syria he had learned Byzantine and Greek songs, which made up the repertory of the Byzantine versifiers with the accompaniment of the *barbito.*[8] In Persia he grew skillful in performing on the instruments and singing the songs of that country. Later, returning to the Hejaz with a wealth of new material, he devoted himself to setting Arabic words to the music he had learned, though omitting some daring tunes and exercises[9] which were used in Persian and Byzantine music, but which

[7] *Agani,* VII, page 179. Kamalo-d-din in his *Al-Imtaa,* page 200, says that Saib Khater was the first to play the lute in Medina, and the first in Islam to sing artistically. According to him, Saib Khater walked while he sang.

[8] In the Byzantine churches versicles are sung, called *stiques,* from the Greek word στίχος. This shows the continuation of Greek metrical technique. V. Pargoise, *L'Église Byzantine,* etc., page 106.

[9] I have [says Ribera] translated these Arabic words as "*tonos*" and "*atrevimientos dificiles*" more as a guess than with clear knowledge of what the Arabic means.

did not suit Arab singers;[10] and this showed that Arabic song did not then require certain technical refinements. Furthermore, Ibn Mosajeh was in Mecca during the time that the great mosque was under reconstruction after a fire. Persian and Byzantine masons had been brought in for the work, and Ibn Mosajeh learned their native songs, setting Arabic words to the tunes which they sang in their respective idioms. He himself confesses to having translated literally Persian and Byzantine songs.[11] Ibn Mosajeh was the first to execute these translations, though his successors imitated him later. He was the teacher of Ibn Suraij and Al-Garid. The former, a Turk by birth, was one of the greatest of the founders of Arabic music.[12] He received his musical education in Persia, and he not only was influenced by Persian art as a disciple of Saib Khater and of Ibn Mosajeh, but learned to play the lute from Persian performers established in Mecca. His instrument was of the Persian type, and his voice was so beautiful and powerful, with such an exquisite timbre, that everybody, great and small, was enraptured by his singing,[13] even though his personality was repellent. He was beardless, one-eyed, bald, lachrymose, and unhealthy, as though dying of elephantiasis.[14] When singing in public he covered his face with a veil, and beat time with a little wand, which produced an extraordinary effect. Nobody of his time could reach the same heights of perfection.[15] It is told of Ibn Suraij, Al-Garid, and Mabed that the three were in Mecca when the emir of the city wished to banish all singers, and, angry at the ruling, they gave a public concert. Mabed began to sing, and stirred the audience profoundly; next Al-Garid sang, and there was a general lament. At last came Ibn Suraij, who stirred up such a tumult that the whole city caught the contagion, and hastened to the emir to have the order revoked.[16]

It was Ibrahim Al-Mosuli who said: "The singing of artists should be a creation of the spirit of man, but the singing of Ibn

[10] *Agani*, III, page 81.

[11] *Ibid.*, III, pages 81, 82, 83; *ibid.*, I, page 95. This fact is insisted upon in various places.

[12] *Ibid.*, I, pages 94 ff.

[13] *Ibid.*, I, page 109.

[14] *Ibid.*, I, pages 94 and 124.

[15] *Ibid.*, II, page 126.

[16] *Ibid.*, I, page 114.

Suraij is a creation of the spirit of the whole people. Some of his songs stir one joyously, others are sweet and gentle, others again very technical and precise; for the incomparable singing of Ibn Suraij possesses all three of these qualities."

Granting the general influence of Persian and Byzantine music, an idea of the heights attained by Arabian music through the talents of this eminent artist may be gained by quoting the following passage from Isfahani: "Ibn Suraij was once asked: 'What do people mean when they say, referring to a singer, "This one is a success, and that one is not"?' He answered: 'The singer who succeeds is the one who executes according to the dictates of art and sings with perfect intonation, producing the sounds correctly; who controls his breath with ease and freedom, conforms himself to the relations between stanzas, articulates his phrases well and with exact grammatical pronunciation, sustains the long notes with ease, knows when to stop at the cesuras and pauses and short notes, can accommodate himself to the alternations of the various rhythms, does not shout unduly in the loud parts; all this without losing for an instant the steady pulse of the rhythm as suggested by the accompaniment.' "[17] These instructions might still be considered the best code for singers.

In connection with Ibn Suraij, his pupil and servant, Al-Garid, must be remembered, for this latter was a half-breed Berber who had been a slave to some famous professional mourners called the Ablat. They had given him to Ibn Suraij as a servant, so that he might learn to sing. He had already learned from his former patrons the dirges and sad songs used in the rites for the dead, and had grown to like these types, but now, increasing his repertory, he began to emulate his master. The latter, in order to overcome the growing reputation of his servant, was forced to devote himself to singing in the *ramel* and *hezej* forms, which were lighter and livelier and more acceptable to public taste. But, notwithstanding, the women of Mecca preferred Al-Garid, whom they sought eagerly as a performer for their entertainments. The pilgrims to the holy city begged to hear him and were prodigal in their applause, averring that they had never heard anything better.[18] The legend that he

[17] *Agani*, I, page 122.

[18] *Ibid.*, II, pages 124 and 125.

heard the singing of the spirits, and with this inspiration composed his songs, almost came to be believed.[19] No one knows how he died, but it was supposed that he was killed by the jinn.

In addition to these singers, who founded the new school, we must point out the significant part taken in it by women. One may note on every page of Isfahani's book that, in the earliest times of Islam, women slaves were frequently found singing cheerful songs in the taverns (today we would call them cafés) or in places where people were amusing themselves, at feasts and celebrations, or singing lamentations and dirges at funerals. But at first these singers could not have been very artistic, judging from the qualities later introduced into women's singing. The most distinguished of the women singers were named Izato-l-Mila and Jamila, according to our most reliable information. Izato-l-Mila was a slave of irreproachable habits, very beautiful, of amiable manners and graceful conversation, and with great elegance of style in her expression. The name Izato-l-Mila was given her because of her graceful gestures and movement in walking. She began her education by learning the songs of the old school, that is, of the women singers Sirin, Zarnab, Khola, Rabeb, Selma, and Raika (this last was her teacher). But when Saib Khater and Nashet arrived at Medina with their Persian songs, she learned from them various themes, on which she in turn composed admirable songs. Her execution was divine, her voice rich and extensive, so that she could be heard at a great distance. She accompanied herself on the lute or harp as well as on other instruments, which she played with greater dexterity than anyone else. It was she who interested the public of Medina in music, making them all fall into moral defection.

In Jamila we find the artistic sovereign of all the first generation of musicians who sang in Arabic. Everyone acclaimed her as the queen of song, from Mabed to Tueis. Ibn Suraij came to learn from her, and Mabed even said that Jamila was the keystone of Arabic art. She herself tells us some facts about her artistic development, and recounts that one day she heard Saib Khater playing on the lute and singing. She learned the tune but not the words, and on this tune she composed a song that pleased the populace more

[19] *Agani*, II, pages 131 ff.

than the original one. Her amiable and happy character made her extremely popular, and her biography is full of charming scenes in which she shows herself a woman of great magnetism. Jamila opened a singing school to which came multitudes of slaves, bringing her master untold wealth.[20] During the time of pilgrimage it was the custom of many masters to send their slaves to her for instruction. At the approach of the pilgrims a multitude of men and women singers, among them Ibn Mosajeh, Ibn Suraij, and Al-Garid, and people of high and low degree, would go out joyously from the city to welcome them into Mecca.

One day Jamila, after the granting of her freedom, seated herself in her house and invited all the passers-by to enter and hear her. When the house was filled to its flat roof, her apron-bedecked slaves served drinks to all the guests. Jamila then told them that, because of religious scruples and a nightmare she had had, she was going to give up singing. At this the audience was divided in opinion, until a doctor of laws arose and declared that singing was a legitimate pleasure, and that only stupid and ignorant people considered it a sin. Then Jamila sang, and when she finished, the people, with shouts and applause, thanked God that the Moslem world was not to be deprived of her music.[21] So art triumphed, silencing all the religious scruples which the zealous Moslems had tried to maintain among the people.

Before finishing this narrative of the great generation of artists who laid the foundations of Arabian song, we must mention Ibn Mohris, Mabed, and Malik. Ibn Mohris was the son of a sacristan of the Kaaba mosque, of Persian origin, and a disciple of Ibn Mosajeh. Like his master, he went to Persia and Syria, where he learned Persian and Byzantine songs to which he set Arabic words. He was the first to sing in the form called *ramel.*[22] As he was very sickly, he did not mingle well with people, so that his life was passed in comparative obscurity. The preservation of his songs is due to one of his

[20] Among her pupils were Mabed and Ibn Aisha, Hababa, Salema, La Akikiya, and the three famous luminaries Khalida, Akila, and Rabi'a, all celebrated singers.

[21] *Agani,* VII, page 118.

[22] We have been previously told that Ibn Suraij sang them and that Tueis composed them.

friends, who helped him and paid his traveling expenses; and to a slave of this protector, who passed them on. One especially important item about him is that he was the first to set pairs of verses to music, because, according to him, one alone could not well complete a melody. This novelty was instantly copied by his successors.[23]

Ishak Al-Mosuli, the illustrious critic, classified the singers of that generation as follows: First, Ibn Suraij; second, Ibn Mohris; third, Mabed; fourth, Al-Garid; and, fifth, Malik.[24] This was the judgment of a specialist, but the popular vote gave the supremacy to Mabed, even to the point of making him proverbial.

The renowned Mabed also sprang from Arab stock; his father was a negro, he a mestizo. He was the pupil of Saib Khater and Nashet. He composed with great skill, sang dexterously, with a manly, powerful voice, which aroused the ardor of his hearers. Above all he must have been a good teacher, as many famous singers were trained in his school. Many slaves learned from him and spread his fame over all the Moslem realm.[25] One significant detail of his manner of composition is still extant. Ishak Al-Mosuli speaks of having asked Mabed: "How dost thou prepare thyself to compose thy songs?" "I climb into my saddle, beat time with my stick on the pommel and sing softly, fitting the verse to the rhythm until I succeed in adjusting the melody." It is said that the songs of Mabed clearly showed this method of composing in the result.[26]

Malik, born in Medina and pupil of Jamila and Mabed, was a great singer and composer, but most interesting to us for his individual method of composing. He says that he learned popular songs current among the people and arranged them, adding, eliminating, and embellishing them to his taste. In this way he reached such perfection that even in imitating the songs of his teacher, Mabed,

[23] This statement shows that previous to Ibn Mohris the melodies of songs corresponded only to the two hemistichs of one verse, and that thereafter two more were added as a second verse, thus completing the melodic quatrain.

[24] *Agani*, I, pages 145 and 146.

[25] The fact of his having gone to the court of Damascus also contributed to the great fame of Mabed. The Caliph became so frenzied at hearing him that he flung himself into a pool of water!

[26] *Agani*, I, pages 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 31.

he improved them. He composed new melodies, and used the dirges sung by the professional mourners, which became more artistic with his alterations. Once he learned a tune without words from a Syrian muleteer who was guiding his string of mules, to which he later added Arabic words; and another time he used a little song of a weaver of Mecca. He used one of these songs to impress the Caliph Al-Walid, who had not been pleased with his first hearing of Malik's songs. The latter, on being told of his failure, drank several cups of wine, entered the palace after knocking loudly on the door, and sang this tune at the top of his lungs; and this time Al-Walid was aroused and fascinated.[27]

There were no singers of great fame at this time outside of Mecca and Medina, but two musical centers were growing: Wadi-al-Kura on the Arabian peninsula and Alhira in Irak.[28] Omar bin Daud taught the singers of Wadi-al-Kura. He had learned from the masters in Mecca and was a skillful singer, especially of sad and sentimental music, and a talented composer. He tells of journeying

[27] *Agani*, IV, pages 166, 167, 168, 171, 172. Many musicians of lesser magnitude in Mecca and Medina were worthy of note. Ibn Aisha, a pupil of Mabed and Malik, was an excellent singer with a lovely voice, but a poor instrumentalist and dependent upon his accompanist for success. He learned songs very rapidly and could improvise while singing. This enraptured the Medinans, and his fame is due partly to this ability (*Agani*, II, pages 59, 65, 74).

Adarmi was a musician fond of improvising, and when a friend of his, the owner of a wine-shop, could not sell his wine, Adarmi composed a song called "The Good Red Wine," which he sang with such success that all the wine was sold immediately. Whereupon Adarmi abandoned his music and returned to his previous good habits (*Agani*, II, page 173).

Salema Al-Cas was a half-breed slave woman educated in Medina, and so excelling in song that, when the Caliph Yezid heard her, he bought her, paying 20,000 dinars (a gold coin worth about ten shillings). Her specialty was funeral songs, with which she could move her hearers to tears. One of these complaints Mabed had composed expressly for her (*Agani*, VIII, pages 5 to 13).

Khalida was a slave of Ibn Shemis in Mecca. She, Akila, and Rabi'a were known as "the three luminaries." Khalida composed a song with which Ibn Jami produced an extraordinary emotional effect (*Agani*, XV, page 10).

[28] Alhira was a city of the region of Kufa, already in ruins at the time of Al-Muqaddasi at the end of the fourth century of the Hegira. See *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, published by De Goeje, Leyden, second edition, Part 3, page 112.

one night between Medina and Mecca and hearing a man's voice singing a melody more beautiful than anything he had ever imagined; he dismounted and looked for the singer, who turned out to be a shepherd. He begged to have the song repeated, and after the shepherd had received the remuneration he demanded, he sang the song as many times as was necessary for Omar to learn it.[29]

One disciple of Omar's was Al-Hakam bin Maimon, a Persian by extraction, more distinguished as a composer than as a singer. Ishak Al-Mosuli says: "The goal has been reached in four varieties of song: in the *takil* Mabed excelled, in the *ramel* Ibn Suraij, in the *hezej* Al-Hakam, and in the *makhuri* Ibrahim Al-Mosuli."[30]

It is quoted of Hunain of Alhira, a disciple of the school at Wadi-al-Kura, that he was a Christian captive whose duty it was to serve fruits to the singers. He was the most distinguished singer of Irak, a pupil of Omar bin Daud and of Al-Hakam of Wadi-al-Kura. Hunain recounts that, on one occasion while in Emessa, he attended a meeting of the Merrymakers, to which they had invited him. When he discovered that there were no singers present, he asked for a lute and began to sing some of the celebrated songs of Mabed,[31] but the audience was as unmoved as the walls, for Mabed's music seemed to them too serious. Seeing the bad effect produced, Hunain sang some of Al-Garid's songs, but with no better results—they were still unmindful. Then he began to sing the allegros of Ibn Suraij and the *hezejs* of Al-Hakam, and some of his own, exerting himself to overcome this coldness, but they continued apathetic. At the end they said: "Ah! if Abu Monabih were here!" He came, a dirty old codger, ridiculously dressed, and they hastened to greet and make much of him. The old duffer took the lute and sang, while everybody applauded him enthusiastically. Hunain, quite disgusted, left Emessa and went back to the town of his birth.

The governor of Irak at this time published an order prohibiting singing in his province. One day, when he had given permission to the common people to come to his palace to see him, Hunain presented himself, carrying a lute hidden beneath his cloak.

[29] *Agani*, VI, page 137.

[30] *Ibid.*, VI, pages 62 to 64.

[31] Called the *haniat*.

"Your lordship," said he, "I have an occupation by which I maintain my family. Your lordship has forbidden its exercise, and this puts me and my family in a bad way."

"What is it?" asked the governor.

"This," said Hunain, showing his lute.

The governor ordered him to sing, so he ran his fingers over the strings and sang, till the governor exclaimed, weeping, "Thee alone do I permit to sing."[32]

The prince Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi, who heard one of the grandsons of Hunain singing some of his grandfather's songs, said that they did not seem pretty to him. The grandson sang them harshly, without softness, and without the proper phrasing. But the same grandson sang a song by Ibn Suraij with good effect.

Perhaps Hunain was influenced by the old song traditions of Alhira, said to have formed an intermediate type between the *nasab* and the *hezej*, but more nearly resembling the *nasab*—a class of songs which was being put aside by the more distinguished singers.[33] Hunain reached extreme old age and died in a singular manner. He and other singers gave a public recital in his house, to which came such a big concourse of people that it was filled even to the flat roofs, which were so overladen that the whole house collapsed, killing Hunain.[34]

From these scattered notes the reader can form an idea of musical art in the Islamic countries. The first artists flourished in the regions about Mecca and Medina, not because a musical tradition had existed there previously, but because in these cities dwelt the Arabian families of wealth and lineage, who mustered there the sumptuary arts and other elements of culture belonging to their conquered neighbors.[35] Music was brought to these cities by foreigners and not by Arabs, but the latter enjoyed and patronized it, and paid for it. The annual pilgrimages to the two holy cities made an excellent medium for the diffusion of this new music, which

[32] *Agani*, II, pages 116, 117, 119.

[33] *Ibid.*, II, page 121.

[34] *Ibid.*, II, page 122.

[35] See "L'Attitude de l'Islam primitif en face des arts," Henri Lammens, *Journal Asiatique*, September and October, 1915.

spread with marvelous rapidity. The richest families of the empire hastened to provide themselves with male and female slaves who had learned to sing. Many were sent to Mecca and Medina for instruction, so that it became a business to buy slaves, teach them, and re-sell them, exporting them even to the most distant provinces. The greater the religious prohibitions, the more potent became the charm of song. Women with all their timidity dedicated themselves to singing, not only laments like those of the professional mourners, but also the newer and gayer songs which brought delight at weddings, festivals, banquets, and drinking-houses. Everywhere were heard lutes, harps, and psalteries.

Thus Arabic music was born, not by spontaneous generation, nor by the lyric exaltation of individuals, but by direct imitation of Persian and Byzantine melodies, in which improvements were made. At the same time the instrumental music and the instruments used by their vanquished neighbors were also adopted. The artists were plebeians in the sense that they came from the lower classes, for their work was considered to be unsanctioned. But their public was an international one, for those who gathered during the pilgrimages came from the most distant countries. The melodic material was drawn from ancient civilizations, and was selected according to popular taste and preserved by intelligent professionals. Scrupulous and inspired artists adjusted them to the meters of Arabic poetry.

Music, like a swift-flying swallow, came from Persia and Byzantium to hover for a time over the sands of the Arabian peninsula, where it stayed for a few centuries, and then sought another horizon. Nowadays in Mecca and Medina no memory remains of the songs which formerly rejoiced and stirred the inhabitants. European visitors find no trace of the ancient music, so they affirm that it is completely dead there.[36]

[36] Christianowitsch, *Esquisse historique*, page 8.

CHAPTER IV · MUSIC AT THE COURT OF THE CALIPHS :: DAMASCUS AND BAGDAD :: ITS APOGEE AT THE TIME OF HARUN-AL-RASHID :: THE GREAT CLASSIC COMPOSERS, IBRAHIM AL-MOSULI AND HIS SON ISHAK

THE first caliphs, full of the virile and austere spirit of the Arabs, were too serious-minded and religious to amuse themselves by listening to music. Moreover, the school of Arabic music was scarcely formed in their time. Only after the Omayyads came to the throne and were initiated into the new artistic movement of Mecca and Medina were wine and music introduced into the court of Damascus, to be forever after inseparable in Islam. The monarchs of this family, Yezid I and II and Walid II, are said to have been devoted to music.[1]

Isfahani tells that Yezid I, son of Mu'awiya, introduced the custom of having musical festivals in the palace, with ostentatious publicity of his incontinence in drink and the pleasures of music. The artist Sarhon, although a Christian and a slave, was his table companion, and Saib Khater also frequented the palace, where he kept his sovereign company in scenes of noisy intemperance. This caliph did not hesitate to use the state courier to bring from Mecca a singer called Abu Leheb, who had caught his fancy,[2] and whom he recompensed with money and garments fit for the highest dignitaries of the state. It was during his reign that Arabic song as an entity grew up in these two towns and the public drinking of wine and playing of instruments began.[3]

Yezid II was celebrated on account of his love for the singer Hababa, of whom he became enamored as a lad during a journey to Mecca. When he mounted the throne he bought her for 4,000

[1] Hisham I was incapable of distinguishing between a *barbito* (type of lyre), and a *bandola* (instrument of the mandolin family). Abu'l-Faraj, page 200.

[2] Al-Masudi, V, page 450.

[3] *Idem*, V, pages 156 and 157.

dinars, and subsequently her music so ravished him that when she died Yezid kept her body three days without burial, looking at her and kissing her and weeping. Fifteen days later he, too, died of his sorrow.[4] Walid II, not content with listening to music and surrounding himself with instrumentalists and singers, whom he brought from Medina and elsewhere, not only learned to play the lute, but even composed various songs, for which he himself played his accompaniment on the tambourine or other instruments. Sometimes he went as a street singer without any modesty or refinement, getting drunk and singing the gay songs of Tueis; he would be ashamed of himself when sober again, and would forbid those who had been present to tell what they had seen.[5] His reign coincided with the blossoming of music in Mecca and Medina, with Ibn Suraij, Mabed, Al-Garid, Ibn Aisha, Ibn Mohris, Tueis, and Dahman, some of whom sang at court. During the time of Walid II it became the fashion throughout the Empire to hold as slaves women singers who had received their training in both the holy cities.[6]

Musical art was spreading without artificial stimuli from the court. To the Omayyads of Damascus but little is due. From the historians' descriptions of palace scenes[7] it may be inferred that these caliphs even preserved some of the rudeness of the desert and that they inclined more to coarse histrionic jokes than to artistic refinement. To find elegance and trimness it was necessary to wait for the splendor and richness of the proud court of the Abbasids in Bagdad. The first caliph of this family, Al-Mansur, who founded Bagdad (in the middle of the eighth century A.D.), not only disliked music, but sternly prohibited either playing or singing in his palace. One day he heard a great disturbance in his abode and demanded the cause of it. He was told that one of the palace servants was playing on the *tombur*, surrounded with slaves, who were listening with amusement and laughing uproariously. The Caliph asked, "What is a *tombur?*" When he discovered that it was a musical instrument made in Khorasan, he got up and went straight to the spot. Slaves

[4] Abu'l-Faraj, page 199.

[5] *Agani*, VIII, pages 155 to 156.

[6] Al-Masudi, VI, page 4.

[7] *Agani*, VI, page 120.

fled in every direction, while the angry monarch ordered that the instrument should be broken over the musician's head and that he should be thrown out of the palace and sold as worthless.[8]

Although banned, music did surreptitiously enter into the palaces of the Abbasids, and it was almost impossible that the successors of Al-Mansur, growing accustomed to the music with which the palace slaves diverted themselves, should be able to continue the old prejudices. In the meantime the generation of the renowned musicians of Mecca and Medina who were the founders of Arabic song passed, and the knowledge handed down from the earlier masters was put into writing. The new songs held fast to the traditional methods, and both old and new were disseminated even as far as Bagdad.

The principal singer of this period was Sayat, pupil of the erudite historian of Arab music, Yunus Al-Katib.[9] He was an excellent singer, player, and composer, and the teacher of Ibn Jami and Ibrahim Al-Mosuli. These disciples considered that their master was the best singer of the time and that his song heated the blood more than a hot bath. He was in the habit of having as his accompanist a flutist named Habal and another instrumentalist named Okab. He composed some eighty songs along traditional lines, and at his death recommended that they should be kept without the alteration of a single note from beginning to end.[10] Another great artist of this time was the half-breed woman slave, Bazbaz, who reached eminence in the royal palace of the Abbasids after instruction from the masters of the earlier period. She first belonged to a distinguished merchant, the owner of a group of slave women who were excellent singers. He was in the habit of inviting the nobility to hear them, and it was these listeners who helped to conceal the illicit dealings of the merchant. The principal heir of Al-Mansur, Al-Mahdi, bought

[8] Abu'l-Faraj, page 213.

[9] Among the artists of the new generation were Abadil, who never left the Hejaz, and was said to be the best of his period; Dahman, a mediocre artist but clever at teaching slaves; Ibn Abad, a composer along classic lines, and master of Yunus Al-Katib; and Al-Wabisi, a Mussulman singer who became Christian and went to Constantinople, where he is said to have wept while singing, out of remorse for his apostasy (*Agani*, V, pages 133, 166, 175; VI, page 14).

[10] *Agani*, VI, pages 6, 7, 8.

Bazbaz for 17,000 pieces of gold without the knowledge of his father, and she was even said to be the mother of his daughter Alya.[11]

Yezid Haura of Medina was a musician of the palace of the Abbasids in the time of Al-Mahdi, and was principally distinguished for his elegant manner of gesticulating while singing. He and Ibrahim Al-Mosuli formed a partnership for buying slaves, teaching them to sing, and selling them again.[12] Ibrahim took care to recommend to these slaves that they should learn the gestures and attitudes of Yezid Haura while singing, for he considered them supremely elegant. The women obediently learned these and taught them to Ibrahim himself and his son Ishak. Ibrahim begged them, moreover, to pass them along to all with whom they might come in contact, in order to diffuse and popularize this rare quality even among the common people.[13] Another singer of Al-Mahdi's, greatly esteemed by him, was Felih bin Abi'l-Aura, a very famous composer, whose songs were especially popular at Damascus.[14] Al-Mahdi was in the habit of having all his other singers perform behind a curtain or partition, but he listened directly to Felih.

Arabic music reached its culmination during the reign of Harun-al-Rashid and his immediate successors, for the Abbasids, after establishing their rule over all Mesopotamia, were intensely influenced by Persian culture, and imitated even the palace arrangements of the Sassanids. In the time of the Emperor Ardashir there were among the palace employees various classes of players and singers, inferior in rank to the political functionaries, who would now be called the musicians of the royal chapel. In addition to their ordinary compensation, these musicians received extra remuneration when they succeeded in vividly stirring the emotions of their emperors.[15] Harun-al-Rashid and his successors followed the example

[11] *Agani*, XVIII, page 110. The historian of the *Agani* implies that he considers this report as gossip and at least doubtful.

[12] Kamalo-d-din in his *Al-Imtaa*, page 182, says: "If a slave does not sing she is valued at a thousand; if a singer, two thousand."

[13] *Agani*, III, page 70.

[14] *Ibid.*, IV, page 98.

[15] Al-Masudi, II, pages 157, 159; VI, pages 121, 122.

of the Persians, according to the fragmentary data which have reached us, and kept in their palaces at least three types of singers and musicians.[16] Usually each performer was expected to sing or play on certain days of the week, but did so at other times also, if desired by his sovereign.[17] For their concerts they were placed behind a curtain or partition of some kind in the hall where the Caliph held his assemblies. A director, called the leader of the *citara* or partition,[18] received the direct orders of the sovereign in regard to what the musicians were to play.

Because of this partition the monarch could not see the performers, who, on the other hand, were bound by the rigorous etiquette of the palace, and enjoyed little freedom. The lack of spontaneity sometimes bored the Caliph. It is told of Harun-al-Rashid that he said to one of his friends: "I should like to see all my guests and singers together, eating and drinking and amusing themselves without formality, behaving as they would in the house of intimate friends. To manage this best I shall have to be in hiding. Therefore I shall come to your house with some of my kinsmen. You are to invite all the neighbors and singers. See that they be placed where we can watch without being observed. Greet them and distribute gifts and garments." Thus it was arranged. The food and wine were partaken of in the view of Harun-al-Rashid, and the gifts were presented, after which the guests sang with such freshness and unconventionality, some even improvising, that Harun, overjoyed, nearly jumped out from his hiding-place.[19]

Apart from these salaried musicians there dwelt in the palace a multitude of men and women slaves, both singers and dancers. At one time during Harun-al-Rashid's reign a festival was organized in which two thousand slaves were gathered together to sing a *hezej*.[20] Again in the days of Al-Amin, a musical festival was held

[16] *Agani*, XXI, page 9.

[17] The Caliph Al-Wathik held a weekly session of music (*Agani*, XXI, page 150). Sometimes the monarch would start competitions to stimulate the musicians, offering prizes to those who most distinguished themselves. (See Barbier, "Ibrahim fils de Mehdi," page 301.)

[18] *Agani*, XI, pages 73 and 74.

[19] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 101.

[20] *Ibid.*, IX, page 84. For description of this type of song see below, pages 79 f.

in the palace at night, in which all the personnel of the palace took part. The festal hall was filled with slaves of both sexes, who danced and sang in chorus until dawn.[21]

The musician Ibn Sadaka recounts that on a certain Palm Sunday (the Christian festival) he entered the palace of Al-Mamun. There were twenty Byzantine slaves present, dressed in garments of Grecian silk, with girdles, golden crosses at their necks, and carrying palm and olive branches in their hands. The Caliph commanded Ibn Sadaka to sing and play while the Byzantine slaves danced some of their native dances, all of which transported the Caliph to such an extent that he got drunk and gave Ibn Sadaka a thousand pieces of gold.[22]

But all of these scenes, strange as some of them are, do not help us to form an exact idea of the technical side of the music. For this we must consult the two most eminent musicians of the time, who personified the classic spirit of Arabic music, Ibrahim Al-Mosuli and his son Ishak. They were the most renowned musicians of the Abbasid palace. Ibrahim came of a noble Persian family, and was born in Kufa in the year 125 of the Hegira. He lived for a time in Mosul (from which place he took his last name), and died in Bagdad in the year 188 (803 A.D.) at the age of sixty-three.[23] His fondness for music developed under strange circumstances. He was kidnaped one day outside of Mosul by highwaymen, who then repaired to their den to amuse themselves by drinking and singing, as was their custom. During his retention there Ibrahim learned some of the brigands' songs. Thus his interest in music was awakened, and he was stimulated to follow it as a career because of the assurance that various singers had made immense fortunes. He began by traveling about the most distant countries in order to learn from all the existing schools, and, in Rey especially, he mastered Persian and Arabian song. He gathered popular songs in the town of Medina, and sought information about old Arabic music throughout the Hejaz through conversation with aged persons,[24] thus acquiring such universal technical knowledge that there was no type of music which he did not know and utilize. Each of the older singers had special-

[21] *Agani*, XV, page 132.
[22] *Ibid.*, XIX, page 138.
[23] *Ibid.*, V, page 2.
[24] *Ibid.*, V, pages 3, 23, 42.

ized in one style alone, one in allegros, another in slow movements; but the only ones who used all styles were Ibn Suraij, Ibrahim Al-Mosuli, and his son Ishak.[25] There are innumerable quotations in Isfahani's book showing that Ibrahim could tell, on hearing a song, who had composed it, and could recognize the personal style of all the artists who had preceded him.

As the exemplar of classic taste he endeavored to follow strict standards of musical composition. He criticized all personal liberty on the part of the executant who deviated from these rules, and often threw in the face of Mukharrik the liberties which the latter took in his phrasing.[26]

To his keenness of ear and scrupulous tuning the following will bear witness. The singer Ibn Jami paid a visit to Ibrahim one day, and the latter, to entertain him, brought out thirty of his women slaves, who sang, accompanying themselves *in one mode only*. Ibn Jami noticed that, among all the lutes, one string was out of tune. Ibrahim, noting it also, said to the girl with the ill-tuned lute: "Tighten the second string of your lute." She did so, and all was well, showing that, while Ibn Jami could ascertain that one string was off pitch, Ibrahim could detect the exact string.[27]

Harun-al-Rashid one day asked Ibrahim to explain his method of composing new tunes. Ibrahim answered: "I take my mind off of anything that might preoccupy me; I call up the emotional state that should facilitate the inspiration of the songs; and, guided by the rhythm, I sing the motive over and over as often as is necessary to find and master that which I wish to compose."[28] These words indicate clearly that it was considered important to fit to each emotion the most adequate music. And actually, certain witnesses say that they could hear Ibrahim, through the open casement, working over his compositions, going back to balance the melodic parts, while during it all his slaves played the accompanying instruments.[29]

On one occasion he composed a melody for three stanzas, the first in the type of *ramel* and the last two in the rhythm of the *first takil*, thus combining two different rhythms in one song.[30] The music

[25] *Ibid.*, V, page 34.
[26] *Ibid.*, V, page 18.
[27] *Ibid.*, V, page 39.
[28] *Ibid.*, V, page 34.
[29] *Ibid.*, V, page 9.
[30] *Ibid.*, V, page 5.

of his songs, like that of his predecessors, must have been easily popularized, as the following account shows: "On one occasion Ibrahim and his son Ishak, unable to decide which of the two had composed the best songs, resolved to submit the question to an arbiter, and chose the first person upon whom they stumbled, an ignorant wood-cutter carrying his burden across the desert on his shoulder."[31] They did not search for an artist, prince, or courtier for judge, but chose a peasant.

The number of Ibrahim's compositions is said to be nine hundred: three hundred of superior merit; three hundred of average value, like those of ordinary composers; and three hundred of little worth.[32] Among them all one was so outstanding as to be comparable only with the three best works of earlier times: one by Al-Hakam, one by Felih, and the third by Sayat.[33]

Ibrahim was the teacher of many pupils, including his own son Ishak, of whom we shall speak later. Through his personal example various musicians cured themselves of defects. For instance, he not only taught Arabic music and its technicalities to Barsuma, the celebrated flutist, and to Zelzel, the great instrumentalist, but he also helped them to correct bad habits which they had acquired. He was in the habit of drilling his pupils by beating time with a wand.[34] Many slave-girls brought the highest prices in the market when they had received a thorough training from Ibrahim, and in these ways he amassed fabulous wealth, counted by millions of silver coins.[35]

We shall close his biography with the kindly judgment of Harun-al-Rashid, who was a man of refined musical taste. One day Ibrahim was singing before Harun, who was intensely stirred and leaped up, shouting frenziedly: "Oh! Father Adam, if only thou

[31] *Agani*, V, page 21.

[32] This is the judgment of his son Ishak (*Agani*, V, page 16). Elsewhere in the *Agani* it is said that the number is six hundred: two hundred superior, two hundred mediocre, and two hundred poor (*Agani*, XVIII, page 179).

These approximate figures given by the historians are only generalizations.

[33] *Agani*, V, page 8.

[34] *Ibid.*, V, pages 12 and 32.

[35] *Ibid.*, V, pages 6, 8, 37.

couldst have had the joy of listening to this descendant of thine who is before me today! Surely thou wouldst have been delighted to be the ancestor of this estimable creature."[36]

Ishak Al-Mosuli, the son of Ibrahim, had not the voice or other qualifications of his father, but he perhaps excelled in musical erudition and technical knowledge. He maintained the old-school traditions of the Hejaz region both in execution and in composition, for which he was much esteemed by nobles and plebeians alike, and he may be considered the last who was comparable to Ibn Suraij and Mabed.[37] Ishak's technique, like his father's, did not come so much from books as from observation and experience and direct investigation of music as it was then performed. Sometimes he was perplexed by others who laid before him theoretical questions such as were discussed in the Arabic translations of Greek works, and, blushing a little as though ashamed of his ignorance, he would answer: "That cannot be solved by words; that is proved in executing the music."

Although he was no theorizer, Ishak's store of knowledge was very great, and he knew the old songs from those of Tueis on, not only the various types but also the special melodies of each artist, and he could distinguish them better than anyone else. His erudition was so extraordinary that his contemporaries often doubted his word as to so many historical attributions. One day they wished to test him, and two women who knew how to write placed themselves behind a curtain in the house where Ishak was visiting. Some songs were sung, and Ishak gave the author's names, as well as other historical facts about them, while the women noted down all that he said. After a lapse of time considered sufficient for him to have forgotten the circumstance, they found occasion to repeat the same songs and questions. Ishak answered as before without varying one iota, as if he had been reading from the notebook employed during the first conversation. Thus the truth of his statements was confirmed.[38]

He demonstrated his critical acumen and artistic intellect by inventing a new classification for musical compositions. Former critics

[36] *Ibid.*, V, page 38. [37] *Ibid.*, V, pages 49 ff. and 97. [38] *Ibid.*, V, page 86.

had classified melodies solely by rhythm. Ishak went into more detail of tune and tempo and also into the determination of the fundamental notes of the accompanying instrument—that is, what we would now call the key, or harmonic basis of the accompaniment, with its possible combinations.[39] Ishak was also familiar with foreign music. The famous singer, Mukharrik, recounts that during his enslavement his master, from whom he had learned to sing, also had a Byzantine steward, who often sang in Greek. One day the master said: "Learn this Greek song of the steward's and set Arabic words to it, so that it may be sung as one of our Arabic songs, and we can put Ishak Al-Mosuli to the test and see if he can hit the mark in classifying it." Later, when Ishak came to the house, the master commanded Mukharrik to put this Byzantine melody among his Arabic songs without indicating any change. This was done, while Ishak listened attentively, concentrating on the different sections of the melodies until he could be sure of the disposition of phrases, and of the proportions and cesuras. At the end he said: "That is a Byzantine song"—a judgment which produced general admiration.[40]

Of Ishak's critical sagacity many tales are told. At one time a new song was brought to him for identification; on hearing it, he judged that it had been composed by a woman, because of its smoothness and tenderness; and, by the strict disposition of its parts, conjectured that the composer had very well-defined habits in her lute accompaniments. This was the truth, for it had been composed by the famous singer, Oraib.[41]

As a lute-player, Ishak was marvelous. One day in the palace of the Caliph Al-Wathik, Zelzel, Molahit, and Ishak met together. Molahit was the leader of the instrumentalists of the royal chapel.

[39] *Agani*, V, page 49.

[40] *Ibid.*, V, page 54. In regard to ancient Arabic song the following may be quoted: "One day a group of singers were conversing before the Caliph Al-Mamun about the type of song called *hezej*. Amer bin Bana said that there were few of this type among the old songs. Ishak replied that there were many, and began singing examples. Of one variety of *hezej* alone, that accompanied in one mode and harmonic pattern, he played thirty, only seven of which were familiar to his hearers" (*Agani*, V, pages 54 and 109).

[41] *Ibid.*, V, page 53.

Ishak besought him to turn the strings of his lute off pitch, which he did. Ishak took it up, tested it for a moment to determine the pitch of each string, and said to Molahit: "Sing anything you wish." Molahit began to sing and Ishak accompanied him on the falsely tuned lute without the slightest deviation in pitch being audible; but his left hand was observed moving restlessly up and down the neck and fingering the frets. In admiration of this amazing dexterity the Caliph exclaimed: "Never have I seen a musician who could perform such a feat!" Ishak answered: "Ordinary musicians cannot do such things. The only one I know who can do it is Al-Fihlid [a celebrated musician of the Persian emperor's], who played once before Chosroes with a falsely tuned lute without the emperor's noting it."[42] Again Ishak, in a competition with other singers before Al-Wathik, grasped a lute and shifted the strings, putting the second in place of the bass, the first in place of the third, the third to where the first should be, and the bass for the second. He began to play, saying: "He among you who would sing, let him sing," and then accompanied without a single fault.[43]

One day Ishak set himself to accompany Zorzor after putting the lute out of tune. No one guessed that the lute was off. Then he altered another lute, loosening some strings and tightening others, and said to Zorzor: "Choose one of the two and take the positions which I indicate." Ishak began to sing, and Zorzor, imitating the positions Ishak showed him on his lute, accompanied him perfectly. The song finished, Ishak said: "Now do thou play a prelude or a phrase of any song, whatever pleases thee, as long as it is something familiar." Zorzor began to play, but went all to pieces. Then the Caliph Al-Mu'tasim, who was present, exclaimed: "Was there ever his equal?"[44]

It is said that Ishak introduced the use of falsetto, or male soprano register, because it was best adapted to his voice. His artistic skill was great, as was his taste in singing, but his natural voice was inferior and his own songs were more admired when sung by others.[45]

Ishak composed a song and then explained the idea which was in

[42] *Ibid.*, V, page 54.

[43] *Ibid.*, V, page 86. [44] *Ibid.*, V, page 87. [45] *Ibid.*, V, page 75.

his mind during the making: "This song of mine imitates the game in which a man intercepts the ball with a stick, while the people in the hippodrome run after it, and, reaching the end, give it a last stroke that sends it over the goal."[46] From this explanation one may infer that he was composing music suggested by a game similar to polo. On one occasion Ishak, while singing a *takil* of Ibn Suraij, was suddenly taken by the caprice of singing it in the *hezej* rhythm. He was reproached for his audacity, which amounted to a profanation; but the event shows us one of the expedients which were resorted to in composition.[47]

A few observations of the period on the songs of Ishak show that all music was growing more complex and that he personally contributed to this. In the palace of Al-Mu'tasim were gathered with Ishak the singers Mukharrik, Aluya, and Amer bin Bana. Ishak sang a new tune he had composed, which the Caliph asked to have repeated three times and then expressed the wish that the other singers should learn it. After Ishak had repeated it fifty times these practiced musicians were unable to achieve it.[48] In another anecdote we hear that Ishak set to music four verses, which would, in our judgment, appear to be eight melodic phrases, corresponding to the eight hemistichs.[49]

From the unanimous opinion of the historians and also from the anecdotes above it may be seen that this artist was an outstanding figure of the classic Arab school, which was based on technical principles that demanded the orderly disposition of melodic phrases and a strictly equal division of parts.[50] His own special device, as singer and composer, consisted in passing gradually and smoothly from the *fortes* to the *pianos*, as demanded by the music. Most of his best songs began with a high and loud note, even to the point of giving him a contemporaneous depreciatory nickname—"the scorpion-bitten one." He held the *forte* until the melody gradually dropped in pitch, with an alternating balance of loud and soft, and this was the most exquisite characteristic of his art.[51] The historians describe to us one of his *ramels*, conforming with this style, which began on the highest

[46] *Agani*, V, page 97.
[47] *Ibid.*, V, page 109.
[48] *Ibid.*, V, page 70.
[49] *Ibid.*, V, page 96.
[50] *Ibid.*, V, page 96.
[51] *Agani*, V, page 97.

note of the octave, and gradually descended to end on the lowest note of the octave in the final cadence.[52]

Although these descriptions cannot give the exact picture of a melody of that time, they do establish the specific shades of the art, besides informing us of the historical vicissitudes through which it passed.

[52] *Ibid.*, V, page 9.

CHAPTER V · ARTISTS OF THE CLASSIC SCHOOL OF THE MOSULIS :: POPULAR MUSIC AT THE COURT OF THE CALIPHS :: A MUSICIAN OF NOBLE ARABIC FAMILY

THE singer with the greatest natural abilities and the most powerful and beautiful voice of all the Islamic period was Mukharrik, the son of a butcher and slave of the celebrated woman singer, Atika. As a little boy he went about peddling his father's meats in the streets of Kufa (or, according to other versions, Medina). Noticing his beautiful voice, his mistress taught him to sing. Later, Ibrahim Al-Mosuli bought him as a slave, and after further instruction, gave him to Fadal bin Yahya, from whom he passed into the ownership of Harun-al-Rashid. This caliph, thrilled by Mukharrik's singing on one occasion, gave him his freedom and splendid remunerations of money and property.[1]

Al-Mosuli gives as his opinion that never, among Arabs or others, had there been a youth of rarer qualities. The songs of Mukharrik not only made the intelligent marvel, but enthralled all the world. The children in the street stopped their games to listen, spellbound.[2] During the pilgrimages he affected the populace as did Ibn Suraij. The pilgrims of all countries sought him with eagerness and went into ecstasies over his singing. One day he began to sing in a cemetery, and all the passers-by on the adjoining streets, buyers and sellers and all the rest, stopped, leaving their tasks as though enchanted.[3] Another time, at night, Mukharrik went out on the Tigris near Bagdad in a little boat, and, feeling somewhat convivial, began to sing. Immediately torches could be seen moving persistently to and fro in the courtyards of all the castles on the banks of the river, due to the efforts of the inhabitants to get near enough to hear the singing. Even the boatmen wept like simpletons with emotion.[4]

[1] *Agani*, XXI, pages 143, 144, 145.
[2] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 146.
[3] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 147.
[4] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 152.

Ibrahim Al-Mosuli himself confessed that he was profoundly moved by the songs of Mukharrik. At various times tears were seen to run down his cheeks, while he exclaimed sadly and with warmth: "This one will be well suited to carry the standard of the singers when I am gone."[5]

Such was the power of his voice that, when he exerted himself to the utmost, his hearers believed that the earth trembled.[6] It is related that one day, hearing the muezzin from the top of a minaret, Mukharrik was seized with the notion of mimicking the ritual call. Such was the volume of his voice that the townspeople imagined that the Tigris had overflowed its banks to engulf them.[7] But Mukharrik had a defect for which the purists blamed him—he never sang the same song twice alike; he permitted himself to be transported by his inclination, adding something of his own invention, after the manner of a virtuoso. His fellow-scholar, Aluya, was better informed, and liked to adorn his conversation with sparkling anecdotes, which made it most agreeable. He was better disciplined, and executed his music in strict conformity with the rules of classic art, and therefore slaves learned more easily from him than from Mukharrik. But Aluya had not the natural aptitudes of Mukharrik.[8] His voice caused a strange sensation in some people, and one critic affirms that it sounded like the clinking of a bowl, and that even after the sound had ceased it still rang in one's ear.[9] He was a player of extreme skill, though left-handed. The strings of his lute were inverted, the bass string being below, where the first string belongs, and the third in place of the second. He held it with his right hand and played with his left hand.[10] He was judged to be the second of his time in mastery. Said one critic: "The greatest artist is Ishak Al-Mosuli, then comes Aluya; the greatest player is Takaf, and next in rank, Aluya; the best voice Mukharrik, then Aluya."[11]

[5] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 149.

[6] *Ibid.*, XXI, 155.

[7] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 157.

[8] *Ibid.*, X, page 115.

[9] *Ibid.*, X, page 117.

[10] *Ibid.*, X, page 117.

[11] *Agani*, X, page 124. Al-Makkari (II, pages 90 and 91) remembers him in weighing the conduct of the Spanish Omayyads with Ziryab against that of the Abbasids of the Orient with Aluya.

Ibn Abdi Rabbihi, a Spanish Moor, in his *Ikd Al-Farid* (III, page 190) casts aspersions on Mukharrik and Aluya as destroyers of the classic Arab song of the

To the classicist group of the palace in Bagdad, whose leadership was invested in the Mosulis, belonged also several artists from central Arabia who had been invited to come to the political capital of the Empire. One of these was Az-Zubayr, son of Dahman, a skillful player, whose repertory included the ancient Arab songs that he had learned in the Hejaz. He was an able composer, and some of his original compositions yielded him fabulous rewards when he sang them before Harun-al-Rashid. A brother of his, Abdu-l-lah, was a mediocre artist, who broke away and joined the modernist group led by Ibn Al-Mahdi.

Muhammad Ar-Raf was a singer and player of great purity of style, with an extraordinary facility in learning everything that he heard. Many times, when he had heard a tune only once, he could execute it with entire accuracy.[12] He was affiliated with the classic party of Ibrahim Al-Mosuli and his son. His singing was received in the palace with great appreciation, but when he got drunk he became so peevish and contentious that Harun-al-Rashid had to have him thrown out of the palace, and forbade his setting foot there again.[13] He composed a few good melodies, among which several became celebrated.[14]

A galaxy of women singers who have left an enduring fame also belonged to the classical school of the Mosulis. The most renowned was Oraib, said to be the first woman slave reared in the palace who knew how to sing according to the purest popular tradition. She emulated the most eminent artists of the early period, Jamila, Izato-l-Mila, and so forth, who had been brought up in the Hejaz among the Arab common people. She was tall, elegant, extremely beautiful, an excellent poetess, a skillful player, and a consummate artist with a very keen mind, charming in conversation, and moreover a great player of chess and draughts.[15] Her songs were sweet and tender, a new quality to be found in women's songs; and she held herself strictly to classic lines. She never composed any vulgar songs, a failing from which many great composers of antiquity and

Hejaz, because they were converted to the Persian school. I do not know the foundation for this judgment.

[12] *Agani*, XIII, page 19.

[13] *Ibid.*, XIII, page 18.

[14] *Ibid.*, XVIII, page 20.

[15] *Ibid.*, XVIII, page 175.

of the present day are not free.[16] On one occasion Oraib permitted herself to talk very frankly to one of her friends, also a musician, who, after killing his own brother, was overwhelmed with religious scruples about his profession and repented of the sin of singing. When he told her this, Oraib answered very dryly: "Thou hast done well; after all, thy song is insipid, inartistic, and unemotional." The friend, embittered by this estimation of his singing, revenged himself later by saying that Oraib's songs numbered a thousand but could really be considered as one, which was an unfair verdict that Oraib did not deserve.[17]

The vicissitudes of this slave singer, who reached the age of ninety-six years (she was born in the year 181 of the Hegira—797 A.D.), with the enumeration of her masters, the prices which she brought on sale (one hundred thousand silver coins on more than one occasion, five thousand of gold on others), her emancipation, her love for the poet Ibn Al-Modaber, and so forth—all these might be enjoyed, but would take us too far from our main subject.[18] The Caliph Al-Mu'tamid, after the death of Oraib, ordered that all her songs should be collected, for many had become extremely popular. When brought together in books and leaflets, they numbered not less than a thousand.[19]

Many other women singers followed in the footsteps of the Mosulis, some as direct disciples, others as partisans of their classicist tradition; for example, Kalam As-Alehya, a half-breed slave-girl of lovely song and dexterous fingers;[20] Farida, of well-ordered and enjoyable song; but among them all Bedle and Muteyyam were held in highest esteem.

Bedle was an artist of Medina, possessing a vast repertory said to have consisted of thirty thousand songs. She was a pupil of Ibra-

[16] *Ibid.*, XVIII, page 179.

[17] *Ibid.*, XVIII, page 179.

[18] *Ibid.*, XVIII, pages 177 and 182; XIX, page 114.

[19] *Ibid.*, XVIII, page 167; VIII, page 180.

[20] *Agani*, XI, pages 110 and 111. We have frequently seen that there were many half-breed or negro artists. Al-Jahiz (see *Tria opuscula Al-djahiz*, Van Uloten, Brill, Leyden, 1903, page 85) says that one of the famous negro (*zinch*) qualities is the possession of a fine voice. He adds: "You will not find this quality among the singers of Sind [India]."

him Al-Mosuli, Ibn Jami, and others. She sang with exquisite taste and played with great skill, and was the teacher of both men and women singers of great fame. Once, before Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi, she sang a hundred songs of the same rhythmic and melodic type, which this prince, although a great connoisseur of music, had never heard.[21] Bedle had a sad ending. During an evening entertainment of Al-Mamun's at which she was singing, a barbarian from Tabaristan struck her a blow on the head with her lute and killed her.[22]

Muteyyam was a slave of Oraib's and a pupil of Ishak Al-Mosuli and of Bedle. Her reputation grew to such an extent that some people considered her as the third in rank of that time; first, Ishak; second, Aluya; and, third, Muteyyam.[23]

The influence of Ibrahim Al-Mosuli was not confined to song alone, but extended also to instrumental music. Two of his most carefully taught disciples were the great artists whose names were widely known, Barsuma the flutist and Zelzel the lute-player. Both came from among the common people of Kufa. Both were churlish, dirty, and ignoble; but Ibrahim discovered their great aptitudes, taught them, set right their bad habits, and they finally became part of the royal chapel of Harun-al-Rashid, where they accompanied their master. It was Zelzel who introduced the fashion of using lutes in the shape of a fish called *saput*. Previously they had been in the old Persian form.[24]

In the court of Harun-al-Rashid the classic school of Arab music predominated, and without doubt this was due to the personal taste of the Caliph. He appreciated discriminatingly the merits of the singers and noticed with keen critical faculty the mistakes made by even the most eminent musicians. Ibn Jami, when told that his sovereign had criticized him for frequent faults in his execution, said: "I don't doubt it. He has not been listening to the singing of fine artists these twenty years for nothing."[25] Harun did not care for preciosity or virtuosity. One day a pedantic song, shamming timid-

[21] *Agani*, XV, pages 138 to 139.

[22] *Ibid.*, VII, page 31.

[23] *Ibid.*, VII, pages 29 ff.

[24] *Ibid.*, V, pages 22, 32, 35; *Ikd Al-Farid*, III, page 190.

[25] *Agani*, VI, page 71.

ity, was sung in his presence with the idea that these affectations would please him, but he did not hesitate to show his displeasure.[26] On the other hand, he frankly expressed his enjoyment when some other artists sang genuine songs of the people.

Ismael bin Al-Harbad of Mecca sang one day at the palace of Harun-al-Rashid, where he met the two Mosulis and Felih and Ibn Jami. Everyone was filled with admiration for his singing, and Al-Rashid, unable to repress his emotion, started to dance. Al-Harbad, on seeing what an effect he had produced, said that the song told his own history. The story is that he had been a slave in a noble family of Mecca, and that one day his master gave him two coins to go and buy meat. At the market he encountered a maiden carrying a jar on her head and singing this song, but with other words. He begged the girl to teach it to him, which she refused to do except on the payment of two coins. These he gave and learned the song, but on his return to the house his master ordered him a severe beating, and meanwhile he had unfortunately forgotten the song. On another day the master again gave him money to buy meat, and again the incident was repeated. The master, seeing him return a second time without meat or money, asked for an explanation, so Al-Harbad sang the song. Not only was he pardoned for giving away the coins, but he was kissed and hugged by the master for having learned such charming music.[27]

Folk-songs were often used in the repertory of the great singers in the palace of Harun-al-Rashid. One day Ibn Jami sang a song before him that was familiar in Yemen, where he had heard it sung by a black girl in circumstances very similar to those of Al-Harbad. The Caliph, on hearing it, presented him with three thousand gold coins, and on being informed of the story added four thousand more.[28] It is not strange that, knowing this inclination of the Caliph's, Abu Sadaka and other singers should have dared to sing before him popular melodies of the sailors and masons and water-carriers of Bagdad.[29]

[26] *Ibid.*, XXI, page 9.

[27] *Ibid.*, VI, page 145.

[28] *Agani*, VI, page 86. Al-Masudi, in his *Prairies* (VI, page 342), alludes to this song of the negress.

[29] *Agani*, XXI, page 104.

The Caliph admired and rewarded his artists regardless of the ancient prejudices against musicians, although these still persisted among some of the families of the decadent Arab nobility connected with him. We will give in its entirety a curious personal narrative of a great contemporaneous artist to show how music penetrated into the most conservative strata of society, against all the religious and social scruples of the time.

Abdu-l-lah bin Al-Abbas, an Arab poet connected with the imperial family, a musician and composer, tells the following: "My introduction to and study of music was due to my passion for a slave of my Aunt Rakya. I could not visit her often for fear of revealing my devotion and being prohibited from seeing her. So I told my aunt that I wished to learn to sing, but that I desired to keep it secret from my grandfather. My father was dead, and my aunt and my grandmother were very devoted to me. At this, my aunt asked, 'What has happened to thee?' to which I answered: 'It is a great passion that dominates me, and if I am interfered with, I shall die of despair.' I was really disposed toward music and my gifts lay in that direction. My aunt did not oppose me, but indicated that she did not wish me to learn too much, nor to have it known roundabout that I had learned to sing, in this way avoiding disgrace to my father and my grandfather. I answered that I would learn just enough for my own diversion, and thus, with the excuse of music, I began to frequent the presence of my beloved. She and her companions taught me to sing, until, according to their own avowal, I knew more than they did. At least I had accomplished what I desired—to talk with the girl in my grandfather's own house—while he believed that I went there out of the affection I professed for him. No song of Ishak or Ibn Jami or Azzubayr bin Dahman or others was sung in his house without my learning it immediately, and after two or three hearings I could sing it well.

"Finally I was bold enough to compose one song, and then another. These I would sing to the maiden I loved, who replied when I asked her how she liked them: 'I have never heard any lovelier song.' The slave-girls of Al-Harith bin Bashkhir, and those of his son Muhammad, were in the habit of learning songs from my aunt's and grandfather's slave-girls. One day they overheard me

singing the songs I had composed, which they learned and wanted to know who had composed them. As they had been told that it was I, I had to confess. After a time the songs began to be spread about until the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid heard them, and they pleased him so much that he asked Ishak about them. The latter answered that they must be the work of a consummate artist. Harun persisted in inquiring of the maiden I loved, who was unwilling at first to divulge my identity for fear of my aunt and my grandfather, but the Caliph threatened her till she had no choice but to tell the story. Then he called my grandfather and said: 'How is it that thou hast not told me that thy grandson composed the songs which everyone is applauding, and which all the singers use?' 'I know nothing about it,' said my grandfather, quite furious, and, turning to me, he exclaimed: 'Dog, and worse than dog, why hast thou learned to sing so well without my consent? And, moreover, thou hast composed songs that have reached the notice of the Caliph. Thou hast dishonored thine ancestors in their tombs.' But after his first rage was over he sent for a lute, and I sang him an old song, then my two songs, and he was so pleased that he wept for joy. I promised him to sing only before the Caliph or other princes, after which I presented myself before Harun-al-Rashid.

"I was filled with terror when Al-Rashid commanded me to approach. Others were singing, but when it came my turn, I took the lute from the musician at my side, and asked permission to sing. Harun, seeing my embarrassment, laughed and said: 'Don't be so afraid, my man; sit down and sing.' I sang my first song, which stirred the Caliph so that he asked me to repeat it, which I did three times, and as a sign of his pleasure he drank three cups of wine. Then I sang the second song. The Caliph then got intoxicated and called for Masrur [his executive minister], ordering him to give me ten thousand gold coins, thirty splendid vestments, and a box full of perfumes."[30]

In this way did music penetrate into the most inaccessible places, into the very heart of the proudest Arab families.

[30] *Agani*, XVII, pages 122 and 123.

CHAPTER VI · DECADENCE OF ARABIC SONG IN THE ORIENT :: THE PRINCE IBRAHIM BIN AL-MAHDI :: CONFLICT BETWEEN CLASSICISTS AND DECADENTS :: THE TOMBURISTS

THE musical entertainments in the palace of Harun-al-Rashid show what went on, in a more modest way, in the houses of the nobility and wealthy people of Bagdad and the principal cities of the Empire. The powerful family of the Barmecides kept men and women singers, some of first rank, in their personal service. The endowments of Dananir, a singing slave-girl of Yahya bin Khalid, the Barmecide, were such that Harun-al-Rashid himself took great pleasure in going to his minister's house to hear her, and on one occasion he gave her a necklace worth thirty thousand gold coins. Al-Rashid's wife, Om Jafar, jealous of the frequent visits made by her husband and of his excessive gifts, wished to meet Dananir, and was so impressed on hearing her that she understood and even justified her husband's conduct. Dananir had received her instruction under the two Mosulis, Felih, and Ibn Jami, and especially Bedle. Later she, like her teacher, wrote a book on songs which made her famous.[1] The Barmecides kept in their service also the blind musician, Abu Zocar, a charming executant, and Mabed Al-Yakteni, called Mabed the Little, a mulatto of Medina, and a singer of the classic school.[2]

The fashion of keeping singing slaves had developed to such an extent that the training of them grew into a big industry. The rich trader Ibn Ramin of Kufa became celebrated when he acquired a multitude of slave-girls, most of them from the Hejaz, where they had been taught the most approved methods of music. Anyone interested in singing and desirous of refreshment might present himself at Ibn Ramin's house. Salema Az-Zarka, Saada, and Rabi'a, all celebrated artists, belonged to him. Once he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, taking his slaves with him, and while there he sold

[1] *Agani*, XVI, pages 130, 131, 132.

[2] *Ibid.*, VI, page 295; XII, page 161.

Salema for one hundred thousand *dirhems*. His musical parties were notorious, so that when a mosque was built near by it was found necessary to close his house to the public in order to prevent drinking and singing there.[3]

Many of these women singers, although of common origin, ended by marrying their own masters, because of their personal attainments and excellent training, thus often achieving the highest positions and immense fortunes. Moreover their sons, although inheriting the nobility and patrimony of their fathers, carried on their mothers' fondness for music. Alya, daughter of the Caliph Al-Mahdi by Macnuna—a slave-singer—was given an education which included the reading of the Koran and other religious books, and, obedient to her training, she ordinarily drank no wine. She was a great artist and composer, and some say that she composed about fifty songs, others seventy-two or -three. At the death of Al-Rashid she developed such religious scruples that she gave up both wine and music.[4]

Not only were there princely singers (among others Abdu-l-lah bin Muza Al-Hadi, a fine singer and lute-player; Abuisa bin Al-Rashid, a good singer; Abdu-l-lah bin Muhammad Al-Amin; and Abdu-l-lah bin Al-Mota, composer), but also caliphs on the throne who enjoyed composing music. Al-Wathik composed a hundred songs which the great critic, Ishak Al-Mosuli, considered as impassioned and fine. Al-Wathik used strategy in getting Ishak's opinion of them, telling him that he had heard an old woman sing them, but, as Ishak knew this to be a pretext on the part of his sovereign and realized that the Caliph was the author, he extolled the merits of the old woman's songs. Al-Wathik liked to have Mukharrik sing his songs, but, as the latter insisted upon making additions of his own, the Caliph, annoyed, would get Farida to interpret them, confident that it would be done more correctly.[5] After Al-Wathik no other caliphs were really musicians except Al-Mu'tamid, but the latter's originality was so much admired that he was classed with the notable masters of the classic school.[6]

[3] *Ibid.*, X, pages 128, 129, 130, 132.

[4] *Ibid.*, VIII, page 189.

[5] *Ibid.*, VIII, pages 157 ff.

[6] *Ibid.*, VIII, page 189.

The Abbasid prince who acquired the greatest fame as an artist and who wielded the most lamentable influence was Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi, considered as the chief personification of the decadence of Arab music, for the time of decline had already begun.

Arab music had spread so far that it penetrated all provinces of the Empire and all social strata. The songs of the classic writers had traversed distant regions, and in many places taverns and public halls had been opened where playing and singing were to be heard. The profession of singer brought large sums, and this stimulated and intensified competition. Before this time the great composers had been the first to execute their own songs, and they naturally made their interpretations conform to the character of their compositions. But Ishak Al-Mosuli was more composer than performer, and, owing to the inferiority of his voice, his melodies gained in being sung by Mukharrik or others who had good voices. In this way dawned the realization that song-singing could stand alone as an art by virtue of the quality of re-creation. The performer, with his spirit of emulation aroused, was tempted to show off his own attainments and to take liberties in his interpretation with the idea that he was improving the songs. Thus grew up virtuosity, which, when exaggerated, destroys art and becomes merely the glorification of personal mannerisms. This desire for originality led in time to all sorts of extremes, for the best-liked songs were sung by such varied types of people, many of them bad performers, often enough to become tiresome.[7]

Likewise the springs of inspiration began to dry up. The earliest composers did not hesitate to avail themselves of this abundant inheritance by copying Byzantine and Persian music, and each wrote perhaps fifty to a hundred songs. Ibrahim Al-Mosuli is said to have reached the number of nine hundred, and Oraib a thousand. The repertory of one singer, Bedle, reached the number of thirty thousand. In proportion as composition increased, inspiration was dissipated, and, although composers traveled in search of new material, the exhaustion of ideas was inevitable. Moreover the spirit of emulation and the anxiety to arrive at quick results meant that,

[7] *Agani*, IV, page 171. The singer Malik complains that "the people learn the songs, alter them to their injury, and then attribute these lapses to the composer."

instead of spending the necessary years in the acquisition of good technique, the high road to learning was sought, the quick and inexpensive way that should lead swiftly to celebrity.[8] At first the influence of these various stimuli was widespread and unconscious, but later a tendency developed to justify superficial aims in art. Various decadent schools grew up, contrary to the classic tradition of execution and the accepted criteria of art.

The Prince Ibrahim, son of the Caliph Al-Mahdi and brother of the classicist, Harun-al-Rashid, was one of these decadents. He had a beautiful voice and good training, and when his voice was heard within the palace instantly every employee—slave, workman, artisan—left his job to listen attentively, while if someone else sang after the Prince they all went back to their work without further ado.[9] But for all his good voice and knowledge the Prince was ungoverned and liked to alter the songs to suit his own taste. If it was suggested to him that this was a defect, he would answer: "I am a king and the son of a king, and I'll sing as I please."[10] He is said to have been the first, or the most conspicuous, to open the door to audacities which in time discredited the traditional school.

The decadents of all epochs blame their lack of fecundity on the rigidity of the old forms, which they consider as hindering their genius; moreover, severity on the part of the classicists awakens in them the spirit of insubordination, which makes them seek originality at all costs. This phenomenon is described by Isfahani, the historian whose works are our principal source of information. He says: "From then [ninth century A.D.] until now [tenth century A.D.] two schools have been in existence: one which follows the teachings of Ishak Al-Mosuli and his disciples, who did not wish to change the ancient music but to execute it faithfully or with the most sparing

[8] Al-Jahidh says, in his *Majmuato-r-rasail* (page 186), that in his time (the beginning of the third century of the Hegira, ninth century A.D.) the diffusion of musical knowledge was very wide. Educated people were in the habit of taking sides with the various schools that were disputing for supremacy, and took pride in talking of these matters in technical terms.

[9] Barbier de Meynard, "Ibrahim fils de Mehdi," pages 206, 319, 328.

[10] The eternal revolt against systems of art repeats itself as a rule under similar circumstances. It is the old opposition between Apollo and Dionysus, the first representing precision and form, the second dithyrambic exaltation which breaks all bonds.

variations; and that of the partisans of Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi and his imitators, Mukharrik, Sheria, Raik, and others, who sang according to their own whims. The habits of these latter helped those who were averse to serious instruction and wished to facilitate the learning of music. Thus it is that song nowadays is not what it used to be, because they have continued making changes until there are now five methods, more or less. The ancient purity of the art is not preserved today, and those most responsible are the Banu Hamdun, pupils of Mukharrik, and the Zoriats of the Caliph Al-Wathik, and the slaves of Sheria and Raik. Even of the classic compositions, such as those of Oraib and her slaves, Al-Kasim bin Zorzor and his son, Bedle and her school, the slaves of the Barmecides, and so forth, possibly little remains in a pure form. Anyway, we have today a little of everything, some pure and some altered."

Thus deterioration set in just when enthusiasm for music was greatest in Bagdad and when most of the composers and artists were living, at the moment when the public was passionately favoring one or the other of the two schools. This exaltation of the public, anxious to satiate itself with music, this excessive eagerness for *feeling* music, is another sign of decadence. It reaches a point of intoxication, in which reason and common sense are lost.

In opposition to the classical Oraib, the decadents placed the celebrated Sheria, a half-breed slave-girl. She was first the pupil and then the wife of the Prince Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi, and, having learned the Prince's songs, considered herself superior in endowments to Oraib. Prince Ibn Al-Mu'taz wrote a book about this singer describing the noisy scenes stirred up by her partisans and those of her rival.[11] Isfahani tells of other happenings at the evening assemblies of the stylish folk at the king's country residence of Saramanra, where the public, divided into two groups—the Oraibists and the Sheriaists—disputed hotly the merits and originality of the songs of each. Sometimes the two met at the same party, accompanied by their cohorts of singing and playing slaves. Oraib and Sheria would remain silent while the slave-girls sang their songs. That part of the public which favored the performance applauded warmly, while the opposing group occupied itself by sitting in judg-

[11] *Agani*, XIV, pages 105, 106, 109.

ment on the originality of the composition[12]—judgment that must often have mortified the composer, for it revealed her as copying other songs.

The greatest authority at the parties of Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi was Ibn Jami, who received his education in the classical songs while growing up in Mecca. Because of his artistic ability he advanced rapidly from poverty to opulence, and he composed songs some of which were irreproachable in style.[13] He was really an emotional singer, especially when circumstances demanded it, and felt deeply what he sang. One night while in Medina he heard that the monarch desired his presence in Bagdad, so he went and sang before the Caliph, although he had just heard of the death of his mother. He made a profound stir because of the deep feeling he displayed.[14] He was, however, uncertain in his execution and made mistakes frequently,[15] which defects Harun-al-Rashid was quick to notice. It was perhaps because he was ridiculed for his careless ways that he was inclined to follow the party of the Prince.[16]

In the anti-classicist group there were some musicians of moderate acquirements, improvisers conspicuous because they accompanied themselves on instruments easier than the lute. Muhammad bin Al-Harith was one of these, and he used the *mizafa* or harp, as did the earliest singers, until one day in the street the passers-by made fun of him, asking if his *mizafa* was a rat-trap. This shamed him so that he learned to play the lute.[17]

The man who contributed most in a historical way to the school of Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi was Amer bin Bana, who wrote a book of real interest about the history of Arab song. As a composer he was neither original nor fertile nor of outstanding merit; he distinguished himself more as an extemporizer. He reproached Ishak Al-Mosuli for having studied music in order to earn money, and because he had to work hard and repeat a composition many times to learn it, while he, Amer bin Bana, had learned music for pleasure,

[12] *Ibid.*, XIII, page 28.
[13] *Ibid.*, V, page 26.
[14] *Ibid.*, VI, pages 65 ff., 73.
[15] *Ibid.*, V, page 10.
[16] *Ibid.*, XVII, page 73; XIII, page 18.
[17] *Ibid.*, XX, page 80; X, page 153.

and improvised, thus obviating the weariness of these dreary preliminaries.[18]

On one occasion Ishak Al-Mosuli, chief of the classicists, and Amer bin Bana carried on a lively discussion before the Caliph Al-Wathik about a song composed by Ishak's father, Ibrahim, and which Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi had had the nerve to touch up, thus, according to Ishak, spoiling the original song. To prove this, Ishak sang the song as his father had composed it, and its charms could easily be seen. Then Amer bin Bana sang it according to the arrangement of Al-Mahdi. Ishak, having shown the superiority of the original song, took occasion to point out that Amer committed a grave mistake in altering the construction of songs and corrupting the artistic norms of whatever he was singing.[19] One must confess, however, that sometimes Amer had happy moments in which, in the excitement of competition, he triumphed over the good singers of his time.[20]

Another sign of the musical decadence was the increasing fashion of using the *tombur* (or *bandola*) of Khorasan. The sonorous lute, which demanded long and costly training, was being supplanted by this other instrument, which required less preparation and was at the same time much poorer in artistic resources, for it had apparently only two strings. The introduction of the *tombur* from Central Asia brought traditions of small artistic worth. So many people applied themselves to learning to play the fashionable instrument that a book was written about the *tombur* players. It had been in popular use for some time, and finally penetrated the castle of the caliphs to compete with the classic lute. From the available sources it is impossible to judge the special qualities of the music of the *tomburs,* but the musical structure and rhythmic types remain identical with earlier forms. But it seems that one can distinguish a certain romanticism, a seeking to associate external surroundings, in order to heighten the effect, such as the silence of moonlight nights[21] or subtleties of expression of joy and sorrow according to the character of the composition.[22] But the judgment of the Caliph Al-Mu'taz that songs with

[18] *Agani,* XIV, pages 50 and 51.

[19] *Ibid.,* V, page 105.

[20] *Ibid.,* XIV, page 54.

[21] *Ibid.,* XII, page 160.

[22] *Ibid.,* XXI, page 164.

the *tombur* were prettier and gayer than those with the lute indicates that their artistic qualities were of a less complicated kind.[23]

The contact with other old civilizations, more frequent as communications improved, may also have accelerated the decadence of Arab music. Some authors have laid the blame on Persian influences in palace music. In the summer palace of Al-Wathik, at Saramanra, preference was shown for Persian songs called *fihlidias*, because composed by Fihlid, a singer for the Sassanid emperors. These were sung by slaves who were natives of Khorasan, who accompanied themselves in a special manner known as "Persian accompaniment."[24] Older popular traditions were also preserved in the frontier districts

[23] *Agani*, VIII, page 178. This judgment agrees with others that show that in the repertories of some of the tomburists *ramels* and *hezejs* predominate: light types suitable to a simple instrument. Land, in his *Recherches*, page 113 (extracts from Al-Farabi), says that "the *tombur* lent itself to tenderness and luxury." That is to say, *tombur* music was more effeminate and delicate than that of the lute.

Jahta was the author of a book on *tomburs* to which Isfahani refers in describing the various musicians most famous for this kind of music, among whom the following were the most important.

Ahmed bin Osama of Kufa, better known as Ahmed An-Nasibi, was a great artist, unequaled among the tomburists or even among many of those who sang to the lute. He was the author of some celebrated songs of the *nasab* type. Ahmed was not a Mussulman when he was learning to sing, but was converted later, though he still continued his music (*Agani*, V, page 153).

Ahmed bin Abi Sadaka, a skillful and exquisite artist, was the son of one of the surpassing singers of Harun-al-Rashid's time, and the composer of many *ramels* and *hezejs* and other songs of the kinds used by the tomburists. He was in the service of the Caliph Al-Mutawakkil, but he earned much more money singing and playing in private houses than at the royal palace (*Agani*, XIX, page 138).

Among all the tomburists Abu Ali Al-Masdud of Bagdad made the most money, and was much admired by the public for the sadness of his songs. His repertory was mainly composed of *hezejs* (*Agani*, XXI, page 164).

Ubayda was more of an artist than the other women who devoted themselves to the *tombur*. Ishak Al-Mosuli himself admired her as a musician and litterateur. The tomburists respected her prestige, and Al-Masdud of Bagdad confessed that she was a superior artist. Her exceptional skill brought her many lovers, who spent vast sums in presents for her. Ubayda's *tombur* was inlaid in ebony, with the following inscription: "Everything may be suffered in love, except treason" (*Agani*, XIX, page 134).

[24] It must also be remembered that in Harun-al-Rashid's palace there were Byzantine singers and dancers. Mukharrik put words to a Greek tune, and there are frequent allusions to slaves who sang in Greek (*Agani*, XIV, page 51).

of the Arab realm, and the *Encyclopedia* of the Purity Brotherhood (written in the middle of the eleventh century A.D.) says, in speaking of the music of that time: "Each town has its own songs and modes with which it is satisfied, without resorting to those of other places. Thus the Daylamites, Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Ethiopians, Persians, Byzantines, and other peoples of distinct languages, characters, and social customs, each delight in the individuality of their own songs and modes, and not in that of others. It is the same with music as with dinners or clothes. No one can count the number of these peoples except God who created them and gave them their different characters, customs, languages, and colors."[25] That most learned writer Al-Jahidh speaks of the admirable East Indian songs as though he had heard them in Bagdad with their accompanying Indian instrument called the *cancala.*[26]

Thus we find that the Moslem composers had at their disposal an enormous fund of musical themes as material to be transformed artistically. They used simple, even severe models, to construct a popular art which did not tend to virtuosity. But later it all dried up or was corrupted, resulting in a very delirium of plagiarism, caprice, and virtuosity, all done with the purpose of appearing original.

The Murcian philologist Ibn Sida, in his book *Al-Mukhasis,* has left us a very frank and vivid description, copied from an Oriental writer, of what was happening in the Orient during the period we are studying. He says: "As for musical composition, there are musical thieves as well as poetic thieves. There are poets who have clearly taken a whole verse or stanza, others who have taken two or three words or an idea, dressing it in other language. The same is true of song-writers; for there are shameless ones who take a tune and barefacedly give it other words. This is what the tomburists of our time have done, also some of the mediocre lute-players. Others steal part of a melody, a phrase, an echo, a ritornelle, and so forth. Some hide

[25] Cairo edition, I, page 92.

[26] In the work *Majmuato-r-rasail* of Abu Uthman Amer bin Mahbub, who was known as Al-Jahidh (Imprenta del Progreso [Progress Press], Cairo, page 80), this instrument, the *cancala,* is described as having one string fastened to a gourd and as being treated like a lute. We also find that the Indians had various kinds of dances and gay compositions (allegros).

the theft by changing the rhythm from a *first takil* to a *second takil*, or a *ramel* to a *hezej*; others who combine phrases from three or four *first takils* into one, a bit here and there, and are really fitting the parts together only so that they get a patch-work (or pot-pourri)."[27] The period of sterility in inspiration marked by the introduction of potpourris shows most clearly that deterioration had set in.

The study of the vicissitudes of Arabic music in the Orient from the tenth century A.D. to its extreme decadence of today would be interesting, but the present investigation must determine as clearly as possible its characteristics at the time of its greatest flowering.

[27] Cairo edition, XIII, page 11.

CHAPTER VII · CHARACTERISTICS OF ORIENTAL ARABIC MUSIC :: HARMONY, RHYTHM, AND EXPRESSION

THE musicians who founded the classic Arab school acquired from their neighbors their technique, melodies, instrumental music, and the instruments themselves, especially the lute. But, as in Muhammad's day the Arabs already possessed a classical traditional poesy, it was necessary for the music to adapt itself to this metrical art, which did not change. The first work of the composers was to set Arab words to the tunes they used,[1] forcing the melodies into strict rhythmic forms with regular beats. The teachings of Ibn Suraij did not permit of caprices on the part of the performer, and slight irregularities of pitch or rhythm, or carelessly pronounced words or shifts of accent, were all considered as faults worthy of censure.[2] The taste of the earlier listeners was not corrupted, for they enjoyed simplicity and naturalness in music.

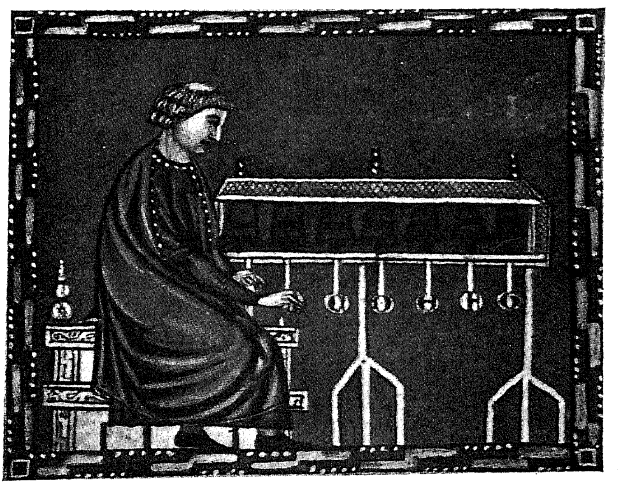
This early music is generally believed to have been always in unison, but there are strong indications that it was already harmonic.[3] More or less complicated instruments of the bagpipe or organ type were used, some with stops that sounded simultaneously, like a pedal

[1] See above, chapter iii, page 33.

[2] The precision of pronunciation insisted upon is shown by a passage in Isfahani (*Agani*, V, page 57) in which he remembers that a singer was blamed for the serious mistake of pronouncing the word *dahabtu* in its common form, *dahabt*. This omission of only one vowel disturbed the whole rendering.

[3] This may already have been suspected from the indications that have been given of large orchestras made up of stringed instruments. It is impossible that they should not have noted the phenomenon of sympathetic vibration, for the strings of a lute always vibrate when one of their tones is sounded near by.

It is told of Jafar, the timbrel-player, that before he tuned his instrument he insisted that the singer should hum the first notes of his song. Then Jafar could know how to tune, and it is said that his accompaniment was marvelous (*Agani*, XIV, page 51). Here we have a case in which the timbrel, while marking the rhythm, repeats a single sound that must harmonize with the accented beats of the song.



Above: Musician playing bagpipes
Below: Musician playing carillon
(From the manuscript of the *Cantigas*)

point, which to be agreeable at all must have been harmonically related. We cannot fix the rules of that harmony by means of the inaccurate descriptions available, but the inference that it existed is there, I believe.

Isfahani reminds us of one occasion when Ishak Al-Mosuli played on the lute a lovely and very complicated prelude in which there were florid beats of a certain type,[4] which Dozy, in his dictionary, explains.[5] They consist in *striking a sharp blow across all the strings at once* with the plectrum. As it is impossible to fret so that all the strings sound in unison,[6] obviously the different strings must have combined harmoniously to make an agreeable whole. If the instruments used with the voice were played merely in unison there would have been only one kind of accompaniment, that is, repeating the same notes as the singer. But let us remember the description of Ibn Jami's visit to Ibrahim Al-Mosuli, when thirty of the latter's slaves sang together accompanying themselves, it is distinctly stated, as a unit. The fact that this is emphasized as a rare detail implies that it was out of the ordinary.[7]

Some slaves from Khorasan sang a song of Fihlid's in Persian before Al-Wathik, and special mention is made of the "Persian accompaniment." If this had been in unison there would have been no difference between the Arabian and Persian. On another occasion a singer was asked, as he accompanied himself on the lute: "What type of song is that?" He answered: "*Hezej.*" "And the accompaniment?" To which he replied: "*Ramel.*"[8] This indicates a degree of independence between the melody and the accompaniment that even includes differences of rhythm.

Al-Mosuli knew that a certain melody had been composed by a woman who was in the habit of playing accompaniments. If accom-

[4] *Agani,* V, pages 119 and 120.

[5] *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* [see Spanish edition].

[6] The classic lute had four strings tuned in fourths.

[7] Isfahani relates an anecdote of Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi in which the latter says that the devil revealed to him *both melody and accompaniment.* (If unison had been meant there would have been no need for mentioning the accompaniment.) Barbier, "Ibrahim fils de Mehdi," page 307.

[8] *Agani,* V, page 53.

paniments were in unison, he would not have made this distinction, but if there were harmonic forms which were followed with more or less routine alternations, the character of the song could be easily recognized by a man of Mosuli's attainments.[9]

One indication is important. Using Al-Mosuli's classification, the historians described the songs of that period according to their technical attributes: first, according to the rhythm; second, the fingering or position on the neck of the lute; third, the alternating use of the principal bass note in combination with a secondary one.[10] The Arab characters used to describe this last classification would, in my judgment, be unintelligible if they did not show the mode of the song and the harmonic alternations indicated for the fundamental notes of what we should now call chords.

The scale then in use also inclines one toward a belief in the existence of harmony in Arab song. This scale was never explained by the learned as being composed of tetrachords or hexachords but simply as octaves, and this division is essentially harmonic. Al-Khoarezmi, in his *Mafatih*,[11] calls the octave the total distance or interval, calling the topmost note *siah* and the lowest *sajah*. So that there may be no misunderstanding he explains that any open string when struck gives out a *sajah*, and the *siah* corresponding to this *sajah* is the sound made by the same string when fretted in the middle. He also indicates fifths and fourths that correspond exactly with ours.[12] Consequently this elementary doctrine explained in the *Mafatih* confirms the results obtained by Land in his study of Al-

[9] Isfahani says that the singer Ibn Jami preferred to have Barsuma accompany him on the flute, because the latter followed him well, leaving him free to make his interpretation, which others did not do (*Agani*, VI, page 71).

[10] These *majras* must be alternating tonalities, but with a fixed relation one to another, because there are many texts in which they appear among the rules for the songs (*Agani*, *loc. cit.*).

[11] An Arab book written in the last third of the tenth century A.D., in which are explained technical, scientific, and artistic terms.

[12] The smaller intervals referred to in the *Mafatih* are the fifth (between the bass string without fretting and the *sabbaba* of the third string) and the interval of a fourth between the open bass string and the *khinzir*, or the same string with the little finger on the fourth fret. As the strings of the lute were tuned in fourths, this will be seen to correspond with our fourths.

Farabi, i.e., that the Moslems used the diatonic scale now employed in Europe. This must have been the case, for, as we have said, the Arab musicians copied Byzantine models. It is to be remembered that Al-Mosuli, learned enough to know the personal styles of Arab composers, found no differences between them in rhythm or tonality, but only in the disposition of phrases.[13] If the Arab scale had been more chromatic than the Byzantine, would not Al-Mosuli have indicated this fundamental difference on such an occasion?

All this leads us to believe that at that time Persian, Byzantine, and Arab music used one and the same scale, which emanated from a common source, classic Greek art; and was therefore diatonic. The extravagant chromatics which modern investigators find in African and Oriental music were not used by the Arabs in the early years of the Hegira.

We have already mentioned one incident so important that it deserves special attention. The celebrated Fihlid, singer to the Persian king, Chosroes, and the distinguished Ibrahim Al-Mosuli both played on a falsely tuned lute without the listeners noting the fact. Anyone with musical experience knows that to succeed in this the artist must have acquired the habit of transposition, and would necessarily have to use sharps and flats. Those lute-players did on the lute what any average pianist does today on the modern piano, on which, due to tempered pitch, any note may become the keynote of a diatonic scale.[14] Musicians using equal temperament become accustomed to transposing accompaniments into any required key, and make frequent use of different keys, passing from one to another in the course of one composition by means of the notes common to each. To me it is evident that similar modulations existed in the period we are studying. It is said that the Caliph Al-Mu'tamid set to a verse of the poet Durayd bin Asama a melody of the *first takil* type, in which he succeeded in placing the ten *nagmas,* weaving them in with

[13] When the first Moslem composers took their inspiration from the Persians and Byzantines, they did not take certain *nagmas* and *nabaras*. By the time of Al-Mosuli these had probably come into use, as there is no indication to the contrary.

[14] That different tonalities were used in songs is seen by the frequent quotations stating that at times musicians altered the tuning of their lutes by raising or lowering strings for certain songs, etc. (*Agani,* VI, page 77). Moreover it was necessary to adjust themselves to the range of individual voices, high or low.

musical phrases which were indistinguishable from those of the best earlier composers, and surmounting the artistic difficulties in every detail. In previous times Ibn Mohris had succeeded in combining eight of the ten *nagmas,* applying them to the larger metrical forms, in which the music has more freedom. But Al-Mu'tamid had applied them to the shortest rhythm, and, in spite of this compressed meter, had overcome all the difficulties admirably. Ishak Al-Mosuli himself said that neither the ancients nor the moderns had ever done such a thing, and that it was not easy to combine the ten *nagmas* into one song, even if one used all the intelligence and ardor that one might possess.[15]

What are these ten *nagmas?* The technique of that time is obscure, for we cannot relate it to well-known facts. The generic meaning of *nagma* is "musical note," and in the plural, "group of notes." In the case above, if it were merely a group of notes within a diatonic scale, there would be no difficulty, for the groups which may be formed are endless. Neither can this combination of notes signify the group of notes which make up rhythmic units, because, according to our information, this melody belonged to one type only, the *first takil.* But if we translate *nagmas* as a group of notes constituting a mode, then the difficulties in the case become self-evident, for to modulate into ten different modes in one short composition without shocking the ear would involve surpassing skill, then or now. This interpretation is only conjectural, but as a conjecture deserves to be set down, so that we may perhaps prove it historically later on.

That this music was essentially rhythmic is certain, for on this point all our informers agree, and it is confirmed by the use of a *baton* and instruments like the tambourine and timbrel, as well as the lute, *tombur,* and so forth.[16] This is the most easily traced characteristic. The usual classification of tunes was by rhythm, and we have sufficiently detailed descriptions to show that the historians followed accurate rules in determining the beat of each one.

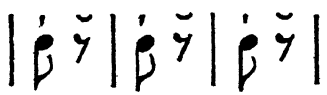
[15] It is also said of Ubaydu-l-lah bin Abdu-l-lah bin Tahir, the doctor of music, that "he could do what none of the ancients could"—combine all the *nagmas* in one song; he succeeded after great expenditure of skill and knowledge (*Agani,* VIII, pages 42 and 43). See also *Agani,* VIII, page 189; IX, page 10.

[16] See above: Tueis, page 33; Mabed, page 38; and Ibrahim Al-Mosuli, pages 49–50; etc.

The treatise of the Purity Brotherhood gives a long exposition of the philosophic theory of rhythm, undoubtedly derived from Greek works translated into Arabic. The rhythms of various kinds used in their time are described, without detailing the elementary rhythmic units, but nevertheless marking the group of beats played by the accompanying instruments for each phrase or section of the melody. The *Mafatih* explains most comprehensibly the system of beats regulating the rhythm of the song.[17]

All the contemporary historians agree that there were four original types of rhythm in Arab music, *hezej*, *ramel*, *first takil*, and *second takil*. Each of these had two forms, one slow (*andante* or *adagio*), and the other faster (*allegro* or *allegretto*, using the terms in their present sense).[18] All speak likewise of a special and much used variety, called *makhuri*, which is described in different ways; some say that it was similar to the *first takil*, others to the *second takil*, but swifter.[19] It is not easy to reconcile the various available descriptions of rhythmic types, but using as a basis that given in the *Mafatih*, which seems the most lucid, we may perhaps make a chart as follows:

1. *Hezej:* one beat followed by a rest.



2. *Ramel:* two even beats and a rest.

[17] Al-Masudi (French edition, VIII, page 97) copies statements from Ibn Khordaba, agreeing with this description in the *Mafatih*.

[18] Purity Brotherhood (page 94) and Al-Masudi (Arabic edition of Bulak, marginal note, Al-Makkari, III, page 372) agree on the two varieties under each type, one tranquil and the other rapid.

[19] Al-Masudi (Bulak edition, III, page 372) says that the allegro of both *takils* is called *makhuri*. The Purity Brotherhood (page 115) say that it is the allegro of the *first takil*.

3. *First takil:* three even beats and a rest.

4. *Second takil:* three beats of unequal length and a rest.

5. *Makhuri:* four beats of unequal length and a rest.

Each of these kinds covers two varieties, one slow and one fast, but as these are differentiated solely by speed, they may be represented by the same figure.[20]

In representing the rhythmic units of ancient music in modern notation, we must point out one difference between the new and the old systems. The ancient rhythm of the *hezej* corresponds to the modern duple measure—a measure of 2/8. But the *ramel,* then treated as duple, we would consider as triple, or 3/8. The *first takil,* then regarded as triple, is represented by a modern duple measure. In reality modern notation has not kept all these shadings of rhythmic accentuation.

Al-Masudi has reported[21] a conversation that took place at one of the parties of the Caliph Al-Mu'tamid on the various types of Arab dances. Generically these coincided with the rhythmic forms, and there were eight, *first* and *second takil, ramel,* and *hezej,* with

[20] The translations of the descriptions of rhythm given in the *Mafatih* and in the *Encyclopedia* of the Purity Brotherhood are on page 44 of the Spanish edition. Further descriptions of rhythm are given below, pages 81, 82, 181, 197 ff.

[21] Bulak edition, III, page 382; Barbier de Meynard edition, VIII, pages 100 and 101.

their respective *allegros*, and from this fact we may infer that all rhythms were danceable. Al-Masudi discusses the native or acquired characteristics of dancers—that the bodily movements of the dancer must coincide precisely with the rhythmic beats, and so forth—but he does not specify the dances, barely alluding to one called the *camel*[22] and to another called the *ball*.

The Purity Brotherhood, in explaining the science of rhythms, use the terms of Arab metrics and make frequent comparisons between the rhythmic units of music and the metrical units of poetry, which shows how intimately they were connected.[23] I have not ventured to make comparisons or to penetrate farther in this line, for I am convinced that I should encounter many difficulties and that there is no essential relationship, since various composers have used different rhythms in setting the same poetry.[24]

Another quality which distinguishes the different varieties of rhythm is velocity, and this depends more on the subject-matter of the words than on the quantity of the syllables; thus for joy lively rhythms are used, and for sorrow slow ones. So, if this music had measures of strict periodicity, and varieties differentiated by greater or lesser velocity, like *allegros* and *adagios*, with varying shades of intensity, *fortes* and *pianos*, it must have been expressive. But it was

[22] The Arabic word employed by Al-Masudi is translated as *camel* (*camello* in the Spanish edition), but this may be a mistaken reading for a Byzantine dance mentioned by other authors (e.g., *Agani*, XIX, page 138).

[23] The Purity Brotherhood suggest (page 93) an apprenticeship of grammar and poetry for those who wish to study the science of music. Especially must they remember the principles of poetry, *for the canons of music are similar to those of poetry*. In reality these explanations apply to all music and not to Arab alone. They add (page 115): "Persian, Greek, and Byzantine have other canons, but they are contained within the general ones already referred to."

[24] Every page of Isfahani shows the same verses set to different rhythms, even those most widely separated, such as *ramel*, *hezej*, or *takil* (*Agani*, V, page 115). One slow song of Ibn Suraij, a *first takil*, was converted by Ishak Al-Mosuli into a gay, lively *hezej* (*Agani*, V, page 109). The most striking example I have found is the following: on a card sent by Alya to Al-Rashid was a verse written by the poet Ax-Xathranji, for which several musicians composed melodies; Ibrahim Al-Mosuli wrote two, one a *makhuri* and the other a *second takil*; Ibn Jami, a *ramel*; Felih bin Abi'l-Aura, a *second takil*; Al-Maali, a *ramel allegro*; and Hunain bin Mohris, a *hezej*, etc.

more than that, for varied emotions[25] imply music of correspondingly different character, even including dramatic declamation with posturing and gesture, and in these latter Yezid Haura and Muhammad bin Al-Harith were models.[26]

Certain descriptions specify objective qualities related to expression, and Muhiyu'd-Din bin Al-Arabi[27] writes that composers used the different registers of the voice, high or low, to sadden or make joyful their hearers. The lexicographer Ibn Sida, in his *Al-Mukhasis*[28] includes some sentences which we shall translate:

"The tunes should be composed so as to be suitable for the words to be used."

"There are melodies that bring tears. These should be set to verses of erotic nature, or those expressing love of country, or memories of lost youth and first love, or the death of a much-loved person, or the manifestation of devout or ascetic sentiments."

"There are other melodies that bring pleasing or joyous emotions, which should be used to describe drinking, or happy reunions for eating, or drinking bouts lasting into the morning hours, or tavern gaieties."[29]

"The melodies that rejoice the soul tranquilly or poetically should be applied to descriptions of trees, flowers, delightful scenes, the chase, etc."

"Those that excite to generosity should be applied to laudatory poems or the exaltation of majesty or courage."

"Those which kindle the soul, impelling it to valor, should be used for verses on military subjects, battles, incursions into enemy countries, the enumeration of prisoners of war."

[25] *Agani*, I, page 102. On one occasion there was a competition between Malik and Mabed. The latter sang a song, in the first stanza of which were four words meaning sadness, insomnia, preoccupations, and solicitudes; that is, four different sad emotions in one stanza. Malik disapproved of it, because delicate shades of meaning should receive adequate interpretation.

[26] *Agani*, XIV, page 54.

[27] A celebrated *sufi* of Murcia who wrote his book *Al-Futuhat* in the Orient. II, page 622.

[28] Cairo edition, XIII, page 10.

[29] The Purity Brotherhood (I, page 87), in enumerating the gay music for weddings and feasts, say: "These are known and used in our day." (We cite this to show that this music was not sad.)

Such paragraphs show that this music possessed adequate resources for all shades of emotions and for all classes of poetry, elegiac, tender, bacchic, pastoral, laudatory, epic, and so on.[30] It is natural enough that it should have been essentially expressive, because the principal medium for its execution was the throat of man. This is the instrument best adapted to the expression of human emotions, especially when united with words as inspired as those of the best poets. The accompanying instrument served only to enhance the importance of the song. The lute was chosen as the instrument of the time best adapted for this purpose. Its rhythmic vibrations, sweet, smooth, and mysterious, permitted various shadings according to whether the strings were plucked with the ball of the finger, or with a plectrum, or with or without a tremolo in the fretting. All these qualities made it the irreplaceable companion for the human voice in intimate concerts of chamber music. The lute, moreover, could be easily manipulated by the singer himself, marking not only the rhythm, but also the harmony, without drowning the voice, with which it could never compete, although it sometimes imitated it in the gracile smoothness of its tone.

[30] European musicologists cite the doctrine of Francisco de Montanos in his *Arte de música* to show the great aesthetic progress. (Folio 27, rev.) "And the most essential part is to follow the words, gay or grave, solemn or light, distant or near, humble or proud. Thus the effect demanded by the words may be produced on the hearers."

CHAPTER VIII · FORM OF ORIENTAL ARABIC MUSIC :: COMPASS, STRUCTURE, AND LENGTH :: CLASSIFICATION :: INSTRUMENTS

THE lack of accurate notation makes it impossible to determine the exact compass of these songs now, but we may remember that in the *Mafatih* the octave is called the total interval. Is this not an indication of the ordinary melodic limit of that period? At least we know that Al-Mosuli's most characteristic melodies began on the uppermost note of the octave, called *siah*, and gradually dropped to the lowest note of the octave, called *sajah*. That is to say that the songs of this author, who was the personification of classicism, did not exceed the limit of the octave and ran from one end of it to the other.

As previously shown, Al-Mosuli recognized a Byzantine song by its form. The structural differences between Byzantine and Arabian songs which this implies must have been due to the coupling of Byzantine or Persian music with the meters of classic Arab verse, and herein lay probably the principal innovation of the new art. The original Arab songs, as already noted, consisted of a phrase that corresponded with one verse of two hemistichs, thus using only two musical phrases. These may be indicated as *a b*. Later Ibn Mohris set music to pairs of verses, thus forming the musical quatrain, indicated as *a b c d* if there were no repetitions of the same melodic phrase. Some songs were preceded by a recitative, and in others (among these, certain of Al-Mosuli's) the melody covered four verses, that is, eight phrases. Nevertheless, the ordinary form was, without doubt, the quatrain.[1] As the melodies of Arabic art generally

[1] Some were said to have, by way of introduction, an *anexir* or musical recitative (*Agani*, IX, page 135). These recitatives are part of the classic rhythms; for instance, one by Muhammad bin Ashad was an introduction to a *first takil*. The harmonic alternation is indicated also. See *Agani*, XII, page 112, where it is explained that an elegiac song begins with an *anexir*.

grew out of folk-music which had been adapted to suit the public taste and to make it easy to learn,[2] it is to be supposed that the compositions were made up of short phrases with more or less repetition. This seems to be a regular characteristic of all folk-songs, for music requires the repetition of rhythmic and melodic patterns, in order to enable the hearers to enjoy a phrase which may at first have escaped them. These repetitions probably were not capricious in such well-organized and artistic music, but the only indication I find of the system followed is in the form of the verses themselves, above all, the lyric quatrains which were most popular at that time and would have served as models. The Persian forms most widely diffused among the people and adopted by the most famous Persian poets were the *dubait* (the Persian word signifies two verses) and the *rubayi* (quatrain). These were brought to such perfection that they lasted through many centuries and were used by all Muhammadans for whom Arabic was the literary and liturgic medium. The disposition of rhymes may be indicated thus: *a a b a*, that is, the first, second, and fourth were monorhythmic, and the third was free.[3] Thus the order of the rhymes in both Arabic and Persian metrics coincides, and when we come to study the music we shall look for coincidence in the musical repetitions.[4]

[2] Isfahani frequently alludes to the popularity of songs. On one occasion the singer Aluya said that, if he really set himself to work, his music could become more popular than nuts (*Agani*, X, page 120). And again, Abdu-l-lah bin Al-Abbas sang a song which became familiar among the common people (*Agani*, V, page 101). A certain new song was so much liked that people offered it as entertainment for each other, as friends or relatives might do with some out-of-season fruit. Such facts as these, apart from indicating how widespread musical culture was, show that the songs could not have been of great complexity, for, in view of the lack of musical notation, they could not otherwise have been transmitted with such facility.

[3] See Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia from Firdawsi to Sa'di*, pages 18 and 26.

[4] Apart from the simple popular forms there were, as we have said, others more complex, which belonged to court life. Among these were the songs of eight and ten *nagmas* (of Ibn Mohris and Al-Mu'tamid), which were composed of four verses (eight hemistichs), and others, most difficult to learn, in which there are no repetitions. These might be schematized as *a b c d*, for the melodic phrases were different for each hemistich.

But this does not explain the form of the *nuba*, considered a classic by the scholars of Arabic music, and recognized as having later changed its character.[5] *Nuba* is an Arab word which formerly, as now, meant a turn or a time. The musicians used the word *nuba* to express their turn to perform in the palace or elsewhere, and it is thus that Isfahani uses it in many passages, as, for example, the following: "Ibn Al-Harith: 'I had a *nuba* in the service of Al-Wathik. Every Friday I went to the palace in case the Caliph wanted to hear music. If he wanted to drink, I stayed; if not, I left, and it was understood that none of the musicians should present themselves except on the day of their turn [*nuba*]. But one day when I was at home, as it was not my turn, a messenger from the Caliph ordered me to come.' "[6]

From this earliest meaning of turn, the word *nuba* came to imply the music which each artist executed, and even the weekly musical sessions held by certain caliphs, and because these latter were made up of the turns of the various musicians, it meant later the whole of the performance. Each individual executed his own numbers in these performances, conserving his individuality and character; although later a change took place which seems to have resulted in a kind of potpourri, until that which, at first, was a session given by various musicians became the work of one man. It must be to this that the Purity Brotherhood refer in the following passage,[7] which appears to explain the new variegated form mentioned by Ibn Sida in the text, pages 72 and 73: "There are only two ways of passing from one melody to another: either interrupt the song and wait while the instrument is re-tuned, and then begin with a prelude and a new song; or leave the tuning unchanged and pass to a melody of like or similar class. Thus one can go from a slow form to its allegro or vice versa, or to some different style; as, for instance, from the allegro of the *ramel* to the *makhuri*. In this case one must pause on the last two pulsations of the *ramel*, continuing after these with one more beat, then make a slight pause, and begin the *makhuri*.

[5] See chapter ii.

[6] *Agani*, III, pages 177 ff.; V, page 120; VI, page 73; XXI, page 150; etc.

[7] Purity Brotherhood, I, page 118.

"Praiseworthy skill in a musician lies in knowing how to set to gay words the most appropriate music, like the *ramels* and *hezejs*. The part of the verse where the *madih*[8] is found, in which ideas of glory and generosity and nobility are expressed, should be united with melodies which possess such qualities as the *first* and *second takil*. But if, in this dedication, ideas of valor are set forth—of rushing on the enemy, of ardor and action—then melodies like the *makhuri* should be employed, or allegros, or similar types.

"Musicians should also use melodies appropriate to the times and seasons. Thus at festivals and banquets (weddings or circumcisions) and times when companions drink together, the music should begin with songs that inflame the spirit, rousing it to splendor, generosity, and liberality, like the *first takil* and similar types. Then it should continue with melodies such as the *hezej* and *ramel*[9] which cause happy emotions. When the time comes for dancing and the *dastaband*,[10] the *makhuri* and similar things should be played. And lastly, if it is feared that the drunkards may start quarrels, tranquil, sad tunes should be performed, calming and even soporific in character, so that the merrymakers may go to sleep."

From these statements of the Purity Brotherhood the evolution of music may be seen: first, various musicians played in turn separate numbers; then one musician played a succession of different pieces; and, finally, out of a number of compositions one was created, thus making a new form. Therefore we should not be astonished that in the end they gave the name of *nuba* to those compositions in which a number of kinds of pieces were combined.[11]

The word *ador*, meaning "turn" or "time," is used with the same significance as *nuba;* thus it is said of various singers that each sang

[8] That part devoted to the praises of the person to whom the poem is dedicated.

[9] Among the most enlivening tunes Ibn Khaldun cites (*Prolegómenos*, II, page 419) those called *hezej*. They were gay, appropriate for dancing and marching with the tambourine or flute. Usually they were simple and easy.

[10] Persian word designating a game or diversion in which the participants danced in a circle holding hands. This appears to have been a custom in use among the magicians of Persia. (See Freytag and Lane in their respective dictionaries.)

[11] In the *Arabian Nights*, edition of 1308, II, page 157, the word *nuba* is employed for one song: "I sang an emotional *nuba*."

when his turn (*ador*) came.[12] But since then the word has become the technical term for stanzas of lyric poetry.[13]

Although we have not yet made an analysis of Arab melodies, we possess contemporaneous descriptions, made by musically educated people, which enable us to set standards of classification based on the elements of the songs themselves. The most technical classification, which became the standard, was established by Ishak Al-Mosuli. The dissident school of Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi, Mukharrik, Aluya, Ibn Bana, Ibn Al-Harith, et cetera, wished to find a new tabulation in order to avoid following the classic tradition,[14] but this was based merely on the caprice of changing certain names, such as calling the *first takil* of Al-Mosuli the *second*, and so on, and did not really differ from the older system, nor supplant it. The classification of Al-Mosuli was so perfect technically that even today in Europe we follow nearly the same system, and speak of an andante in E flat in 3/4 measure, thus determining the velocity, key, and measure. Al-Mosuli's description was even more complete, varying only in the order; for it showed rhythm, velocity, position (on the lute) or key, and the connected sweep of the harmony. We have already said that the rhythmic forms of the songs were *hezejs*, *ramels*, the two *takils*, and the *makhuri*. As to speed, there were slow and fast movements; as to key, the fundamental notes played on the lute; and as to harmony, the alternations of the fundamental notes of what we should now call chords.[15]

Apart from this technical classification there were others based on further characteristics of the songs. One of these distinguished between an ancient and a modern type by means of the changes in structural elements that were being introduced into Arab music. At first the songs consisted of only two melodic members, then four, and later still more. Moreover, in the earliest melodies *nagmas* and such innovations were not employed, for composers had not dared

[12] *Agani*, V, page 82; X, page 123; XVII, page 131.

[13] *Ibid.*, I, page 5; IV, page 166. [14] *Ibid.*, I, page 3.

[15] Isfahani (*Agani*, V, pages 49 ff.) enumerates the various forms into which this classification divides the songs. I will not be so bold as to translate his long statement for fear of error in the interpretation of several technical words whose meaning is still obscure but will some day be settled.

to introduce these difficulties of Persian and Byzantine music. We suspect that this is the distinction referred to between ancient and modern in Isfahani's time.

The classification which included the greatest number of examples is based on expression. Even as early as Ibn Suraij's time there were songs of various kinds classed in this way; such as songs that bring tears, songs that bring joy, those that provoke to sorrow, and danceable songs or ballads.[16] Later a new classification was developed in which the songs were analyzed according to the many uses made of music, every social formality, common festival, and individual act having its own kind.

One of the varieties especially to be noted is religious music. As we have said, the early Arabs themselves had been very much against the art of music, and the religious and civil leaders had forbidden it and even punished the singers. But with the passage of time, and above all with the conversion to Islam of other races, the music of these new Moslems not only had to be tolerated, but was introduced into the most orthodox mosques, for in their former religions music had not been forbidden but was used to give solemnity to the ceremonials.[17] The Purity Brotherhood tell us that ultimately, just as the Hebrews sang the psalms of David and the Christians sang in their churches, so the Moslems used song in their mosques to further religious unction. These authors do not hesitate to state that, contrary to all the severity of the earlier Islamic doctrines, "one of the joys of the blessed will be to hear music in Heaven."[18] Al-Ghazali himself, to justify the introduction of music into the Moslem rites, makes the following statement:[19] "The *sufis*, most venerated for

[16] *Agani*, I, page 109.

[17] In the tenth century a prophecy attributed to Muhammad was fulfilled. (Muhiyu'd-Din bin Al-Arabi echoes this in his *Mohadarat*, II, page 115.) The prophecy says: "The time will come when there will be many opinions in my town; when the dictates of passion will be followed, and the psalmody of the Koran will be accompanied by flutes and sung, without scruple, as though they were secular songs, and this will not be recompensed by God."

[18] *Encyclopedia*, I, page 164.

[19] See his book on the lawfulness of music (*Ihya*, II, page 182), translated by D. B. MacDonald in his study, "Emotional Religion in Islam as Affected by Music and Singing," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1901–1902.

their sanctity and doctrine, like Al-Jonaid, Dhu-n-nun the Egyptian, Al-Harith Al-Mohasibi, had no scruples about the use of music as an important element in religious practices of ascetic life. The *sufis* justified this conduct, citing the traditions of some of the companions of the Prophet, as, for instance, the grandsons of Abu Talib and Abu Bekr, who considered it legitimate to listen to such songs. Al-Koshairi, Abu Talib, Al-Maki, Al-Bakilani, and the Imam Al-Haramain defended the more liberal doctrine with prudent restrictions."

Al-Ghazali not only considered this practice lawful, but even useful in the service of God, apart from its efficacy in stirring the soul to emotional ecstasy. Though justifying the prohibitions of the Prophet (as applied to instruments used by dishonest folk addicted to wine),[20] Al-Ghazali recognized music as being lawful, saying that it would be necessary to prohibit music *per accidens* if, on account of it, adultery and other such vices were increased, if amorous songs were heard by bad women or young deceivers, if the songs described woman, or if the listeners were sensual and provoked thereby. Outside of these cases music is profitable, as are all games that dissipate sorrow.

Al-Ghazali's classification,[21] although not very technical, is interesting:

1. The song of pilgrims, who overrun all countries, and sing verses to the sound of the timbrel and the *shahin*,[22] in which they describe the Kaaba temple and the sacred places within its boundaries, such as the mansion of Abraham, the wall that surrounds the inclosure, the well of Zemzem, likewise the ceremonies of pilgrimage, even the desert journey across Arabia. With these songs they perform the pious act of rousing in others the desire to accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca and to visit the holy places. Words alone can arouse devout sentiments, rhythmic words still more, and if melody

[20] The instruments ordinarily used when people were drinking—flute, timbrel, and stringed instruments—were prohibited, but not the tambourine (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya*, I, page 192).

[21] *Ibid.*, I, page 188.

[22] Some dictionaries, like *Taju-l-Arus*, IX, page 257, say that this instrument is the same as the *sanch* or *sancha* (junk or chunk—a stringed instrument). Said Mortada, in his *Ithaf*, VI, page 503, says that this is the *surnay*, flageolet or flute. With all these descriptions we still do not know what the *shahin* was.

is added the effect increases, the more so with the cadenced beat of drums. But care must be taken not to use flutes or stringed instruments, which are forbidden by religious law.

2. Soldiers' song, which serves to excite men to war. This song is as lawful as that of the pilgrims, but of different character. Military songs must impel to valor, to wrath against the infidels, and must lay stress on the virtue of bravery, even the scorning of life. This requires adequate music.

3. The song of *rejez*[23] which champions use at the time of combat to invigorate the soul, increase the prowess of individuals, and fire them with the heat of battle. These songs, which exalt bravery, are in accordance with a traditional Moslem custom and go back to the valiant companions of the Prophet, Ali, Khalid, and others. To create this enthusiasm it was necessary that the *shahin* should not be played at military camps, for its mellifluous and delicate sound might produce the opposite effect. On these occasions tender, sad melodies must not be sung.

4. The mourning songs or laments, conducive of tears and anguish, are of two kinds, laudable and reprehensible. It is blameworthy to sadden one's self about acts of Providence like the death of a relative. Such sadness seems to imply a revolt against divine decree, or that one is angered by the acts of Providence. Thus to provoke sadness by means of laments is wicked; noisy lamentations are therefore explicitly prohibited.[24] Now sadness in man over his lack of faith, his religious apathy, or his need of repentance, is laudable, and to help arouse this sadness with music is praiseworthy. Thus the prophet David sang his repentance. The preacher in the pulpit of the mosque is even permitted to sing sad verses to draw tears of contrition from his flock.

5. Pleasant songs that promote happiness are lawful, if the happiness is of a legitimate nature. These are songs executed on

[23] The simplest type of Arabic versification.

[24] In spite of prohibitions and reprimands from the moralists, funeral lamentations were usual in all Moslem countries. Sometimes the best women singers executed laments that stirred everyone to tears; even the caliph wept when he heard the lament composed by Muteyyam and executed by men and women singers (*Agani*, VII, page 34). At the death of Abu Isa, brother of Al-Mamun, Oraib and her women slaves sang laments that made a deep impression of sadness.

church holidays, at weddings, on meeting returned travelers, at births, circumcisions, and when boys finish their religious training of memorizing the Koran. In support of their lawfulness, traditions of the Prophet are cited, for he permitted the women of his town to climb to the flat roofs and sing with the *adufe* when he entered the town. This kind of joy may be expressed not only by singing verses, but even with dances and other rejoicings, for it is said of many companions of the Prophet that on various occasions they skipped with joy.

6. Amorous songs, sung by the lover to stir the object of his affections and for the comfort of the soul; a legitimate intensification.

7. The song of mystic love. It is likewise legitimate to sing for love of God, our creator.

The enumeration shows the rich gamut of emotions possessed by this music.

The music was vitally influenced then as now by the instruments used, and might be still further classified as vocal and instrumental, but we must remember that Arab music originated and really existed primarily as vocal music, with the instruments accompanying the voice. At first the tambourine was used by all singers, and Tueis, Adalal, and others used it exclusively. Later other instruments came into use among the Arabs, adopted by them from conquered peoples; more especially the Persian lute, which remained the most important and classical. A book could be written about this one instrument, collecting the data preserved by the writers on Arab music.[25] We have brief descriptions of some of the other instruments, while in a few cases only the names and vague or even contradictory statements remain. The big Arab dictionaries, compiled generally by purists, give hardly any names of instruments, as they were mostly of foreign origin. The *Mafatih*, Al-Masudi, and the Purity Brotherhood mention a few of the most familiar instruments, as well as those of the earlier peoples whose musical traditions the Moslems adopted.

The *Mafatih* gives us the following list:[26]

"The *organ*, a Greek instrument, and later Roman and Byzan-

[25] They were made in various sizes, treble, baritone, etc., according to Ibn Sida in his *Al-Mukhasis*, XIII, page 12.

[26] Pages 236 and 237.

tine, made of three buffalo hides fastened together, with another big hide to which are joined various brass flutes, on top of the central skin and connected with it. These flutes have stops which are related to each other in pitch, so that agreeable sounds are emitted, tending to arouse joy or sadness according to the will of the musician.

"The *shaliak*, stringed instrument of the Greeks and Romans similar to the *chanc*.

"The *lur* (*lira*?) is the name given by the Greeks to the *sanch*.

"The *kitara* (*cithara* or guitar), Greco-Roman instrument similar to the *tombur*.[27]

"The *tombur Al-Mizani* is the *bandola* of Bagdad, with a prolonged neck.[28]

"The *rabeb*, well known among the Persians and the people of Khorasan.[29]

"The *mizafa*, stringed instrument used in Irak.[30]

"The *mostak*, a Chinese instrument made of pipes or flutes

[27] The *tombur* of the Khorasan, according to Land (extracts from Al-Farabi, page 115), had two strings and many frets, some fixed and some movable. It was tuned in various ways. (Not to be confused with tambourine.)

[28] The *tombur* was in very general use, as we have seen. Al-Masudi (Bulak edition, III, page 371) said that it was used in Rey, Tabaristan, and Daylam, and an instrument similar to it among the Nabateans. Land (*Recherches*, page 107), quoting Al-Farabi, says that it is played like the lute. Properly it had two strings, though some had three.

[29] The Purity Brotherhood, page 91, describe it as being capable of continuous sound, as if it were played with a bow. Al-Masudi (Bulak edition, III, page 371) speaks of it as made of wood and having five strings; Land quotes the description of Al-Farabi, saying that sometimes it had but one string; others give it two strings of equal thickness, or again of different thicknesses, like the second and third strings of the lute; and elsewhere it was said to have four strings. It had no frets and did not mingle well with the lute (pages 130 to 132). Riemann in his *Dictionary*, articles "Arabs," "Persians," etc., affirms that the *rabeb* is not spoken of among the Orientals until the fourteenth century, from which he infers that the Europeans did not copy it from the East. Al-Masudi, who wrote during the first half of the tenth century (as did Al-Farabi), speaks of it as being widely known and in common use. There is also the *shahin*, referred to repeatedly by Al-Ghazali.

[30] The *mizafa* was a harp. Ibn Sida (XIII, page 10) says that David played the *mizafa*. Al-Masudi (Bulak edition, III, page 371) says that they had five, seven, and twelve strings, and that the Greeks even used twenty-four strings.

bound together. The Persian name of this instrument was *bisamosta* (bagpipes?).

"The *nay* is the vertical flute.[31]

"The *sornay* or *zurna* is a whistle.[32]

"The *shaera*, the stop found at the upper end of the flute, with which one may extend or diminish the length of the tube to lower or raise the sound.

"The *sanch* is a stringed instrument, called in Persian *chanc* (generally referred to in English as "junk" or "chunk"); or it is a tambourine, used by the Arabs, in which may be heard the sound of little bells or little metal disks (like jingles?).

"The *shahrud*, an instrument first invented by the sage Ibn Ahuas Al-Sogdi in Bagdad, year 300 of the Hegira.

"The *barbat* is the Persian name for the lute; it means 'duck's breast,' because it was shaped like the breast and throat of a duck."[33]

Thus it will be seen that a variety of instruments was in use in the ninth and tenth centuries in the Orient; strings, both plucked and bowed, wind and percussion, and so forth.

There were also various lists of songs with unusual characteristics, such as that made by the musicians of Harun-al-Rashid at his request. The Caliph commanded that his many musicians, and especially Ibrahim Al-Mosuli, Ibn Jami, and Felih bin Abi'l-Aura, should choose the hundred best songs composed by Arab singers.[34] This done, he wished to have the ten best chosen therefrom, then

[31] The Purity Brotherhood (page 91) give it in the plural, implying double flutes. Land (*Recherches*, page 129) says that often two flutes were joined, and called *donay*.

[32] Land (*op. cit.*, page 128) says that it is a flute of higher range; others again call it an oboe.

[33] In addition to these instruments listed in the *Mafatih*, the Purity Brotherhood add (page 97) the *tabales*, tambourines, the *taalat*, the *seaya*, the *sacana*, the *shabebas*, whistles, the *salbab*, and the harmonicon. On page 87 they cite the pastoral flute. Al-Masudi and Al-Jahidh record the *cancala* of India, which takes the place of the lute and *sanch*. Some of these names are given in Arabic characters in the Spanish edition (page 51) as no descriptions are available, nor can they be found in the Arabic dictionaries.

[34] *Agani*, I, page 2. There are descriptions of some of these: a *ramel* of Tueis (*Agani*, II, page 172), a *first takil* of Adalal (*Agani*, IV, page 39), etc.

three, and finally one. It is said that the group of the best three included one by Ibn Suraij and one by Ibn Mohris. Another version gives it as two by Ibn Mohris and one by Ibrahim Al-Mosuli, and says that the best of all, a very complex artistic composition, was composed by Ibn Mohris.[35]

Al-Wathik used this idea in his musical entertainments, and at his command Ishak Al-Mosuli made a collection of the best songs of different peoples and of all times, those considered most artistic by the wise men, and including those of contemporaneous composers.[36]

In addition to these collections from the Courts, the people made their own selection, and many Arab songs attained wide diffusion and great celebrity.[37] There were two that deserve especial notice; one which the heretic Shiite poet Diko-l-Jin wrote in Emessa, an elegy beginning "My eyes!" This became so popular that it was sung by everyone both high and low, until it came to be used traditionally for the days on which are sung the lamentations in memory of Husayn, son of Ali. The words of the other famous song were attributed to Harun-al-Rashid himself, and Oraib executed it on some special occasions. It began, "Three maidens have dominion over me." In Bagdad there was an extremely popular version of this poem, which has been quoted by Islamic writers of all times and countries.[38] But for lack of written notation not an authentic fragment of any of these songs remains. However, the preceding chapters show that this music was both vocal and instrumental, simple for the untrained and elaborate for the skilled professional, emotional, and yet very well ordered. These qualities must have been present

[35] *Ibid.*, I, page 4.

[36] *Ibid.*, I, page 4.

[37] The seven songs called the *Modon* of Mabed, also his *Carracas* and that of the *Crosses* (*Agani*, III, page 93), the *Zayaneb* of Yunus Al-Katib (*Agani*, I, page 2), and Oraib's song for some verses of Al-Bokhtori, which everyone was singing —"How many wakeful nights!" etc. (The words of certain songs were so associated in the popular mind with their music that one had only to mention the first word or two to bring the music to mind.) There was also a song by Oraib to words of Al-Yezidi which began "*Ma da bicalbi*" (*Agani*, XVIII, pages 87 and 189).

[38] *Agani*, XV, page 78; *Al-Futuhat* of Muhiyu'd-Din, II, page 149. In the *Thousand and One Nights* it is attributed to a singer of the Caliph Al-Mutawakkil. In *Agani*, V, page 84, a song is cited which imitated the melody of the muezzin calls.

to make possible its performance by the large orchestras of which we have heard, such as that at the palace of Harun-al-Rashid, which at times numbered two thousand musicians.

Then came the decadence and music fled to other climes. The distinguished French Arabist, Louis Massignon, who has lately been in Bagdad and has studied devotedly the music of today,[89] could not discover anything more than the monotonous thudding on the tambourine.

Thus it is not strange that, saddened by this extreme decadence, European musicians should ask themselves if all this richness of inheritance has been lost. Happily not, for the ancient Arab music, like a wandering swallow, winged its way from the Orient to the Spanish peninsula at the time of its classic growth, and there settled down and grew during many centuries, lovingly fostered. After the invention of musical notation its form could be fixed, so that it may be executed today as it was in the tenth century.

[89] See his *Notes sur le dialecte arabe de Bagdad*, page 17.

CHAPTER IX · ORIENTAL MUSIC AT THE PALACE OF THE OMAYYADS OF CORDOVA :: ZIRYAB AND HIS SCHOOL

In studying the history of music in Moslem Spain we have no guide as expert and well informed as was Isfahani in regard to the music of the Orient. This is not because Arabo-Spanish literature is lacking in works referring to music and musicians, for we find treatise writers and historians[1] who made collections of Spanish songs,[2] but all these books have unfortunately been lost, and we now find ourselves hunting fragmentary incidental references among chroniclers and biographers in order to reconstruct the history of Spanish music. A full history cannot thus be evolved, but we shall try to make as complete a study as is possible with the scattered data available.

[1] Abu'l-Kasim Abbas bin Firnas de Tecorona, astrologer to Al-Hakam I, introduced musical studies into Spain, as well as other scientific instruction. He was an alchemist, philosopher, and poet, inventor of glazing on stone and of an apparatus for flying made out of feathers. He built a room in his house with a drawing of the starry firmament, and caused thunder and lightning in the same room. He made a watch which he gave to Abdu'r-Rahman II. He introduced the poetic art of Khalil. Abu'l-Kasim died in 274 (887 A.D.) during the reign of the Emir Muhammad (Ibn Said, MS 80, page 172; Al-Makkari, II, page 57).

[2] Isfahani's *Book of Songs* was known in Spain as soon as it was written, through an authentic copy sent to Al-Hakam II (Al-Makkari, I, page 250). There were some Spaniards who knew it so completely that they could recite, dictate, or copy it faithfully (Al-Marrakoshi, pages 61 and 62).

Even before the appearance of Isfahani's book some collections of Oriental songs must have been known, inasmuch as Ibn Abdi Rabbihi dedicated one book of his encyclopedia, entitled *Ikd Al-Farid* (*The Book of the Hyacinth*), to Oriental songs and singers (Bulak edition, III, pages 176 ff.).

Yahya bin Al-Khodoj, the Murcian, wrote a book on Spanish songs, taking Isfahani's book as a model (Al-Makkari, II, page 125). Om Al-Fatah Fathuna, daughter of Jafar bin Jafar of Murcia, also wrote a book on Spanish women singers, emulating Isfahani's book (*Tekmila*, published in part by the Centro de Estudios Históricos, page 404).

Other books will be mentioned later.

When the Arabs first set foot in the Peninsula, the schools of song in Mecca and Medina had not even been started, so obviously they brought no musical art with them. Their religion and inheritance gave them the same social prejudices against musicians as were held by their Oriental brethren. The religious law which they imposed on the native Spaniards disqualified musicians and regarded their work as immoral and dishonest, fit only for slaves and infamous folk. According to their legal standards, the word of a singer or professional mourner, publicly known as such, could not be accepted as testimony.[3] Books about songs or laments were not lawfully saleable. Malik, whose legal principles constituted the norm in Spain, condemned song and declared as invalid the purchase of a slave, if the document of sale stated that she was a singer.[4] According to these same laws in the books of Spanish Moslem justice, it was forbidden to rent a house if flute or *bandola* playing was intended within. The public authorities were to punish infractions of the religious law,[5] and zealous judges, like Muhammad bin Selma and others, complied with the law to the extent of ordering the destruction of instruments found being carried through the streets.[6] But in the end, in Spain as in the Orient, musical art conquered all prejudices, and spread to such an extent that those same doctors of law had to see their own wives establish singing-schools inside their very houses,[7] and even

[3] *Al-Mudawana*, XIII, page 3.

[4] *Ibid.*, XI, page 63.

[5] MS 11 of the collection of the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios*, Folio 74, obv. Moreover, in the schools it was forbidden that verses should be read that incited to the drinking of wine, which was the invariable accompaniment of music. (See the form of contracts in my pamphlet on *Teaching among the Moslems in Spain*, page 10.)

[6] Al-Khoshani, *The Judges of Cordova*, pages 217 and 255.

[7] Abdu-l-lah bin Yahya bin Dahun of Cordova, although he was affiliated with the Maleki sect and carried responsibilities which demanded scrupulous behavior on his part, showed himself tolerant in this matter. Singing could be heard in his house, and he did not hide it. On one occasion Maki bin abi Talib was in his house, and, hearing music, mentioned the fact. "Why do you not correct your neighbor and make him stop that humming?" Ibn Dahun answered: "My dear sir, that is in my own house. It is my wife singing; she is educating some children. As she knows about music, she is teaching them to sing. I am a poor man. I have lost my estate and cannot

had to tolerate hearing the public sing noisy laments within the mosques.[8]

It is difficult to change human nature by legal prescriptions, and the Spanish people, according to Ibn Galib, were naturally musical. Of their music prior to the coming of the Omayyads, the Arab historians have not a word to say, but it is to be supposed that it was that of either the native population or the artistic races who had previously dominated Spain. But the first Omayyad, Abdu'r-Rahman I, following the traditions of his ancestors, the caliphs of Damascus, wished to keep several slaves who could sing in Arabic at his court in Cordova for his personal delectation. The woman singer, Ajfa, a fine performer on the lute, was therefore brought from the Orient.[9] Al-Hakam I already had in his palace two celebrated singers from the East, Alon and Zarcon, who sang with great art and whom he paid lavishly. The songs of both artists became the fashion among the Spaniards, for at that time the custom was growing up among well-bred and important people of offering a concert of good music to persons they wished to honor.[10]

Abdu'r-Rahman II was the monarch who most furthered the acclimatizing of Oriental Arab music in Spain. He had a special section of his palace set aside for the women singers, among whom three from the great school of Medina were outstanding. They were called the "Medinans," and their room in the palace was known as the Medinans' room. They were Fadal, Alam, and Kalam. Fadal was a singer possessing all the personal qualifications possible to a woman of the time. She had been a slave to one of the daughters of Harun-al-Rashid, and had grown up in Bagdad and received her instruction there. From Bagdad she went to Medina, where she

make enough to maintain us. My wife is helping thus to feed and clothe me. I have no other choice" (MS of biography, Khalduni Museum, folios 2 and 5).

[8] At the death of both the mother and the wife of Abu Ali bin Ayub Al-Hadad (born 338, died 425 of the Hegira—1033 A.D.), funeral lamentations were sung in the mosque, which was full of people, and this dignitary even contributed to the irreverence by not saying anything to the singers. He had not the valor to forbid it, though he took good care not to talk about it in public (MS of biography, Khalduni Museum, folio 1, obv.).

[9] *Agani*, XX, page 149; Al-Makkari, II, pages 97 and 98.

[10] Al-Khoshani, page 88.

extended her knowledge and accomplishments so that she became an excellent singer. She was bought by the Emir Abdu'r-Rahman II at the same time as her companion, Alam. This monarch, taken by the ability of both these artists and by their polished education and consummate skill, treated them with great distinction. The singer Kalam was not behind them in perfection of song, exquisite elegance, and fine courtesy. She was a Basque maiden who had been sent as a child to the Orient, particularly to Medina, where she became very learned, even to the point of knowing by heart many literary and historical works. She was eminent in various studies and a great reciter of Arab verses.[11] The young and elegant Abu'l-Walid of Alexandria also shone at the court of Abdu'r-Rahman II. Of him it was said that he would have dedicated himself to music if he had not taken the advice of Isa bin Shahid, chancellor of Abdu'r-Rahman II, who counseled him to leave this profession so as not to be hindered in rising politically.[12] So we find that the schools of Mecca and Medina were represented in Spain even from the time of their foundation.

But the fame of all other singers was obscured[13] by the arrival of the distinguished Oriental musician and singer, Ziryab. He was the direct disciple of the Mosulis, and it was through him that the wealth of Arab music penetrated into Spain at the time when the classic school was at its height. This notable singer became the corner-stone of Spanish musical art, not only because his music spread about the Peninsula, but because of his dominating personality. The greatest Moslem historian, Ibn Hayan, dedicated much space to him in his chronicle, *Al-Muktabis,* from which we will abridge as follows:[14]

Ziryab is the nickname by which this musician is generally known, but his real name was Abu'l-Hasan Ali bin Nafi. He was under the patronage of the Emir Al-Muninin Al-Mahdi Al-Abasi. Because of his extremely dark color and the clarity of his speech and the sweetness of his character, he was known as the Blackbird. In Bagdad

[11] Al-Makkari, I, page 225; II, page 96.

[12] Ibn Al-Kutya, page 74.

[13] Al-Makkari, II, page 89.

[14] *Idem,* II, pages 83 ff.

Ziryab was a pupil of Ishak Al-Mosuli, whose songs he quickly learned without his master's cognizance, and, because of his intellect and facility in learning and his fine voice, he reached even greater heights than his master. It is well known that Ishak's compositions taxed the executive abilities of any outsiders, however great these might be, but Ishak did not realize how much Ziryab had learned before the latter's presentation to Harun-al-Rashid. This came about in the following way: One day Ziryab was mentioned before Harun as an advanced pupil of Al-Mosuli's, and the latter said: "Yes, I have heard some nice things from him, some clear and emotional melodies; above all some in which I have shown him unusual modifications that he has adopted, but which are my discoveries; I showed them to him, as I considered them especially fitted to Ziryab's art."

At this Harun asked to hear these melodies from Ziryab, so the latter was presented. The Caliph spoke to him, and he answered gracefully, with real charm of manner. Then followed a question about his skill, and Ziryab answered:

"I can sing what the other singers know, but most of my repertory is made up of numbers suitable only for performance before a Caliph like Your Majesty. The other singers do not know these. If Your Majesty will permit, I will sing for you what human ears have never even heard."

The Caliph ordered that Ishak's lute should be handed to him, but that Ziryab declined, saying: "I have brought my own lute which I made myself, stripping the wood and working it, and no other satisfies me. I have it at the palace gate, and with your permission I will send for it."

Harun sent for it, and, as on examination it appeared like the one he had refused, the Caliph said: "Why were you unwilling to use your master's lute?"

"If the Emir desires me to sing in my master's style, I will sing with his lute, but if I am to sing in my own style, I must play my own instrument."

"They seem alike to me," answered Harun.

"At first view, yes; but even if the size and wood are the same, the weight is not. My lute weighs about a third less than Ishak's and my strings are made of silk that has not been spun with hot water,

which weakens them. The bass and third strings are made of lion guts, softer and more sonorous than those from any other animal. These strings are stronger than any others and withstand better the striking of the plectrum."

Pacified by this explanation, the Caliph ordered him to sing. After a few preludes on the lute Ziryab began, and so stirred Harun that he turned to Al-Mosuli and said: "If I were not persuaded that he had hidden his extraordinary ability from you, I should punish you for not having told me about this artist. You shall continue his instruction until it is completed. For my part, I wish to contribute to his full development." From then on, Ishak, sorry that he had presented Ziryab to the Caliph, became jealous and could not abide him any longer. He had a secret conversation with Ziryab in which he told him that he could not endure competition at the court. "Choose," he said, "as the world is big, either thou leavest to go to some distant place where I shall never hear of thee again, and for this I will supply thee with whatever money thou needest; or if thou remainest here I shall use all means to ruin thee. Which dost thou choose?"

Ziryab, who knew Al-Mosuli, preferred to leave; so Ishak gave him all that he had promised, and Ziryab turned his face toward the countries in the west. When Al-Rashid asked about him again, Ishak answered that he was a cranky and disturbing young man.

Ziryab departed for the Occidental world and the memory of his name was lost in the Orient. On arriving in the West, he wrote to the Spanish monarch, Al-Hakam I, saying that he knew how to sing and begging for an audience at his court. Al-Hakam was delighted and invited him to Andalusia. So Ziryab set out with his wives and children, crossing at the Straits of Gibraltar to Algeciras. There he received the tragic news that Al-Hakam had died. At this he considered turning back to Africa, but Mansur, the Jewish singer sent by Al-Hakam to meet Ziryab, persuaded him to remain and wait for word from Abdu'r-Rahman II, son and successor of the dead monarch. The Jewish singer wrote to Abdu'r-Rahman, telling of the occurrence, and shortly after Ziryab himself received a letter from the monarch inviting him to Cordova and expressing his pleasure in the expectation of his presence. At the same time the Emir wrote to the governors of the districts through which Ziryab was to

pass, charging them to care for him and entertain him. He even sent a eunuch of the highest class to meet him with mules and all the paraphernalia and provisions needed for the trip.

Ziryab entered Cordova at night, as being more decorous for his family, and was lodged in one of the best houses, which had been prepared with all essentials, even to presents of garments. After three days of repose, he was invited to present himself to Abdu'r-Rahman, and was promised the following honorarium in writing: every month two hundred dinars, and his four sons twenty dinars a month; beside this, three thousand dinars annually—one thousand on each of the Moslem festivals, and five hundred each at the festivals of Mahrjan and Nuruz. In addition to these he was to receive two hundred measures of barley and a hundred measures of wheat; all this without counting various orchards and farmhouses, valued at forty thousand dinars, which were given him. With all these arrangements made, and Ziryab's contentment assured, the monarch invited him to frequent the palace as his table companion, so that his singing might be heard.

Ziryab is said to have claimed that the spirits inspired him in his dreams, not only for singing, but for all the music which he was to execute in concert; and if he awoke in the middle of the night, he would immediately call his two slaves, Gazlan and Huneida. Each would take his lute and Ziryab would at once teach them to play the composition and then he would write down the verses. After this he would go back to bed. This is the same tale as was told about Ibrahim Al-Mosuli; but such tales are dubious—God only knows what really took place.

It was in Andalusia that Ziryab added a fifth string to the lute. The original lute had four, and, according to the symbolism of the time, these corresponded to the four humors of the body. The first was yellow and symbolized bile; the second red, for the blood; the third white for phlegm; and the bass string was black, symbolic of melancholy. Thus a soul was needed for the lute, and Ziryab added another red string between the second and third. In this way the instrument acquired more delicacy of expression and greater range of possibilities. He also invented a plectrum made of eagle quill instead of the wooden one commonly used. This new plectrum had

a better edge, and was neater and lighter, so that it was easier to handle and did not wear the strings so quickly.

Ziryab, beside being a good poet, was well educated in many subjects—astronomy, geography, physics, meteorology, and so forth. But above all was this true of his own art, for he had a vast repertory of ten thousand songs, a number never exceeded by other artists, according to Ptolemy and the ancient writers. He was perspicacious and enjoyed all sorts of ingenious devices. He knew all branches of literature, his social contacts were most delicate and courteous, his conversation very agreeable, and his urbanity exquisite, thus combining all the qualities needed for a gentleman of the court, qualities not possessed by all others in his station. The palace officials and other people of importance in Cordova accepted Ziryab's conduct as a social model, and many of his innovations lasted through the following centuries, always connected with his name. Before his arrival in Spain men and women wore their hair parted in the middle and falling on both sides, covering the eyebrows. But when the fashionable people saw that Ziryab, his wives, and sons had their foreheads uncovered, with the hair trimmed level over the eyebrows and slanting toward the ears, they imitated him, until even the servants, eunuchs, and slaves adopted this fashion. Many customs in perfumes, clothes, cooking, and the use of crystal tableware originated with this musician. His dinners became the fashion in Andalusia.

But it is the musical fashions set by him that most interest us. The historian we are quoting tells us[15] that it was the constant practice in Spain for those learning to sing to begin with the *anexir* or recitative as a first exercise, accompanying themselves with some kind of instrument of percussion. This was immediately followed by simple songs, and later more stirring varieties, even *hezejs*, were attempted. This was the method introduced by Ziryab.

When this master gave a singing-lesson he commanded the pupil to sit on a leather cushion and force his voice. If the pupil's voice was powerful, the teaching began without further preliminaries, but if it was a small voice he was ordered to bind his abdomen with a turban cloth to support it, not leaving the voice much leeway in the center of the body, with the intention that it should come out of the

[15] Ibn Hayan, in Al-Makkari, II, page 88.

mouth. If the pupil did not open his jaws enough, Ziryab ordered him to keep in his mouth over night a bit of wood three fingers in width, so as to acquire the habit of opening his jaws. With the idea of observing the natural qualities of the prospective pupil's voice, Ziryab made him shout for some time at the top of his lungs the phrase, *ya hajam*, or simply *ah*. If Ziryab noted that the voice was clear, strong, and pure, without nasality or impediments of speech, or difficulties of respiration, and if he considered that the aspirant had the right personality for singing, then he accepted him, but not otherwise.

Thus far, Ibn Hayan! All this information comes through people influenced by the musical tradition or by the artist himself; but there were contrary opinions. The Spanish poet, Al-Ghazzal, offended perhaps by the prestige of this singer from the East, let loose his invectives and satire against Ziryab, but when Abdu'r-Rahman heard of this violent attitude, he commanded Al-Ghazzal to cease.[16] Ibn Abdi Rabbihi, in his *Encyclopedia*,[17] also treated Ziryab contemptuously, doubtless echoing some of the traditional Arab feeling against singers. Some of the employees of the exchequer strongly opposed paying out of the public funds thirty thousand dinars, the sum which on one occasion Abdu'r-Rahman ordered given to Ziryab.[18] But in general even the priests delighted in the remembrance of Ziryab's name as that of an artist of proverbial fame, one whose music and teaching really formed the traditional Spanish school.[19] Ibn Khaldun[20] tells us that the musical knowledge which Ziryab left as a legacy to Spain was treasured until the provincial and civic governors became independent. Adherence to this musical tradition was widespread in Seville, and when this town decayed, music passed over into Africa and the Almagreb,[21] where some traces of it were still found in the fourteenth century, notwith-

[16] Al-Makkari, I, page 633.

[17] *Ikd Al-Farid*, III, page 189.

[18] The Emir solved the problem by paying the sum from his private purse. Ibn Al-Kutya (Academy of History edition), page 77.

[19] Adabi, page 138, compared Ziryab with Al-Mosuli of Bagdad.

[20] *Prolegómenos*, II, pages 421 and 422.

[21] Old name for North Africa and Spain.

standing the decadence of the African Empire.[22] Until the last days of Granada the poets remembered Ziryab, whom they classed with the illustrious Mabed.[23]

The school of Ziryab took root in Spain, thanks to his many immediate followers, first among whom were the members of his own family. Ziryab had ten children, eight boys and two girls.[24] Every one of these adopted the art of music, though not all reached the same eminence. The best singer was Ubaydu-l-lah; next Abdu'r-Rahman, who was so vain and self-satisfied that he alienated the good will of everybody. Kasim was a good artist and an excellent individual; Muhammad was effeminate. Ziryab's two daughters were much esteemed; Hamduna, the more skillful artist of the two, married as important a personage as the chancellor of the realm, Hashim bin Abdu'l-Aziz. She died before her sister, Alya, who, being the sole survivor of the family, was much sought after as a teacher, drawing to herself all the clientele due to her father's prestige.[25]

Ziryab, moreover, educated one of his slave-girls and taught her his best songs. She was a lovely maiden, called Metaa, and Abdu'r-Rahman II became enamored of her when she went to the palace, sometimes to sing and at other times to pour the wines. This slave-maiden noticed the sovereign's passion, though he had not shown it in public, out of consideration for Ziryab. One day, therefore, abandoning all prudence Metaa indicated her feeling in the verses of her song, chiding the Emir for not expressing his. When Ziryab understood the situation, he hastened to present the slave to Abdu'r-Rahman, so as to enable him henceforth to keep her at the palace.[26] Another pupil of Ziryab's was Masabih, a woman slave with a beautiful voice. Her master, the secretary of Abu Hafs Omar bin Kalil, showed himself very grudging in refusing all appeals to hear her.

[22] *Universal History*, Bulak edition, IV, page 127; Al-Makkari, I, page 222.

[23] Al-Makkari, II, page 832.

[24] Boys: Abdu'r-Rahman, Ubaydu-l-lah, Yahya, Jafar, Muhammad, Kasim, Ahmed, and Hasan; girls: Alya and Hamduna.

[25] Al-Makkari, II, pages 89 and 90. *Tekmila* (Centro de Estudios Históricos edition), pages 400 and 401.

[26] *Tekmila* (Centro), page 399; Al-Makkari, II, page 90.

The poet Abu Omar bin Abdi Rabbihi made such a request and was denied, so he composed some verses in which he said to the owner:

"Dost thou show thyself avaricious about the voice of a bird
that warbles?
I think no man has ever before shown this vice;
For, however many are the people who hear her,
The treasure of her voice is neither lessened nor increased."

Ziryab's songs were carefully collected and preserved by Aslam bin Abdu-l-Aziz, a relative of Hamduna's. He knew all of Ziryab's songs as well as their history and classification, and could perform them. He therefore made an admirable collection, which was later popularized.[27]

Thus it will be seen that Oriental music penetrated and overspread Spain, brought by slave singers who were not Arabian by race, or singers who had once been slaves, or foreigners who had learned in the Oriental schools. The early Medinans found here their later followers, and the classics of the Mosulis became dominant in the Peninsula through the medium of that exceptional artist, Ziryab, a direct disciple of Ishak Al-Mosuli. The same songs and instruments were used in Spain as in the Orient through the middle of the ninth century A.D.

[27] Adabi, page 192, Biography, page 570; *Tauk Al-Hamama* of Ibn Hazam, page 108.

CHAPTER X · WIDE DIFFUSION OF ARABIC MUSIC IN MOSLEM SPAIN

THE example of the monarchs was later imitated by the royal princes and the high dignitaries of the Empire. It was the custom of Abdu-l-lah, the son of Abdu'r-Rahman II's favorite wife, to celebrate Moorish festivals and to give evening concerts that scandalized sincere Muhammadans.[1] Al-Mundir, another son of Abdu'r-Rahman II, bought a singing-girl named Tarb from a merchant for a thousand pieces of gold, and then fell in love with her for her beauty and lovely singing.[2] Uthman, son of the Emir Muhammad, was in the habit of bringing together the literary lights of Cordova, and on such occasions the celebrated woman singer, Bazea, nicknamed the "Imam" because she was the best artist of her time, would sing from behind the curtain.[3] Al-Mutarrif, brother of Uthman, was not only a poet but also an expert musician, skilled in song.[4] The singer, Abu Nasar Mansur, who was ridiculed by the celebrated poet, Mumen, also flourished at that time.[5] Certain wealthy people in the capital permitted themselves the luxury of owning slave-girls who were singers. Adabi tells[6] of one Oriental gentleman known as Ash-shaybani, who settled in Cordova on the edge of the river. One day the supreme judge of Cordova, Muhammad bin Ishak bin As-Salim, was caught by a sudden downpour just outside the city, and sought shelter for himself and his beasts in the courtyard of Ash-Shaybani's house, which the latter graciously invited him to enter. In the course of the conversation the host told the judge that he had a slave-girl from Medina with a particularly beautiful voice, whom no one had heard, and, with his permission, he would bring her out and have her chant some of the Koran and sing some verses. This she did, so arousing the judge's admiration that, to show his satisfaction, he discreetly slipped some gold coins

[1] Ibn Al-Kutya, page 80.
[2] Al-Makkari, II, page 391.
[3] Ibn Al-Kutya, pages 115 and 116.
[4] *Hollato*, pages 70 and 71.
[5] Ibn Hayan, Oxford MS, page 102.
[6] Biography, page 57.

under the large cushion on which the maiden was seated, without the master's noticing it. The rain ceased, and the judge made his adieus most graciously, to discover later that he had left twenty gold pieces under the cushion.

But there came times of political storm for the Omayyad family; a national movement ruptured their prestige throughout the Peninsula, reducing their realm almost to the limits of the Province of Cordova. This was during the reign of the austere monarch, Abdu-l-lah, and the capital was desolate and silent, deprived of all music and diversion; but meanwhile Oriental music was heard over all the rest of Spain.

A kingdom independent of the Cordovan monarchy had been organized in Seville, with its own armies made up of famous cavaliers in the personal service of the ruler, with its own military supplies, and having Cadi or magistrate, and a group of salaried poets, as well as its *citara*, or group of women performers who were curtained off. Among these was the famous Kamar from Bagdad. She was acquired by Ibrahim bin Hajaj Al-Lakhmi,[7] a prince of Seville. He heard that she was a very excellent singer who was for sale in the Orient, and sent a special messenger with much money to buy her. She was very beautiful, a good singer and composer, learned in music, and her use of the Arabic language was distinguished.[8] The celebrated Arab poet and nobleman, Said bin Suleiman bin Judi, whose passion for women was well known, had a beautiful singing slave-girl, called Jihan, who did not conceal herself when singing. People could hear her from the street, as she purposely sang in the uppermost room in the house.[9]

During the reigns of Abdu'r-Rahman III and Al-Hakam—the height of the political power of the Omayyads—it appears that there were no salaried singers nor singing slave-girls at the court. These two monarchs apparently kept the austere customs of their predecessor, Abdu-l-lah; and Al-Hakam II, although interested in all varieties of education, was not inclined either to drink or to music.

[7] Died in 288 of the Hegira—900 A.D.

[8] Ibn Hayan (Oxford), folio 8, rev.; Ibn Adhdhari (Dozy), Part.2, page 132; Al-Makkari, II, page 97; *Tekmila* (Centro), biography, page 2114.

[9] Ibn Hayan (Oxford), folio 93, rev.

Nevertheless, he acquired the first autograph copy of Isfahani's *Book of Songs*,[10] and with it a knowledge of the words of Oriental songs. His brother, Abu'l-Abbas Abdu'l-Aziz, was devoted to both wine and music, but abandoned the former, perhaps because of scruples. When Al-Hakam II learned of this, he gave thanks to God, and added: "If he would abandon singing as well, he would be a just and honorable man." The brother, hearing of this, replied: "No, I will not stop singing as long as Heaven permits the birds to warble."[11] Another son of Abdu'r-Rahman III, although not skillful, played the mandolin and the *tombur* in his youth.[12]

During the reign of Al-Mansur (tenth century A.D.) the fashion of owning singing slave-girls revived and spread in Cordova, and music became once more the attraction in entertainments at court. Historians tell us of drunken scenes of dancing and shouting in the palace of the Prime Minister, in which he and his guests, high dignitaries of the realm, all took part.[13] On various occasions, Al-Mansur, who was a haughty and violent creature, had some singers put to death for daring to slip into their songs allusions that mortified him.[14] Once a guest asked a woman singer to sing one of these songs, and a moment later was presented with the girl's head on a salver.[15]

After the time of Al-Mansur, during the restoration of the Omayyads, concerts and musical parties became the regular thing, and Ibn Hazam speaks of them as such.[16] In the court festivals during the reign of Al-Mahdi, there were orchestras made up of a hundred lutes and a hundred flutes, to the indignation of the pious public, for they remembered similar moral excesses on the part of the half-Christian prince, Abdu'r-Rahman Sanchol.[17] Even the royal

[10] Al-Makkari, I, page 250.

[11] *Idem*, II, page 396.

[12] *Jamhara* by Ibn Hazam, biography of Abdu'r-Rahman III.

[13] Ibn Said, MS Academy of History, No. 80, folio 97.

[14] *Tauk Al-Hamama*, page 35.

[15] Ibn Said, No. 80, folios 48 and 49.

[16] *Tauk Al-Hamama*, page 29.

[17] Dozy, *Histoire*, III, page 284. He was called Sanchol as he was the grandchild of a Christian king whose daughter was the wife of Al-Mansur. Sanchol was a great drinker and a bad Moslem (Dozy, *Histoire*, III, page 268).

princesses of Cordova were fond of music, one of them, the celebrated Vallada, daughter of Al-Mustakfi, being compared to Alya of the Orient.[18] Nozha la Wahdya, a Spanish singer greatly admired for her perfect school of singing, shone at this time in Cordova.[19]

During the period of the Amirids and of the restored Omayyads, Cordova was overrun by European soldiers who came to join the Moslem armies. Some attained the highest posts, and after the break-up of the Empire remained as factional leaders, settling in all parts of Spain. As they came from countries where there were none of the religious prejudices held by the Arab families, they encouraged music at their courts. They had their *citaras* or orchestras of singers and players,[20] according to Ibn Bassam[21] and other authors,[22] who reproach them with being prone to drink and the company of women singers and to lute-playing. Various of these leaders, like Ismail bin Dhy-n-non of Toledo, were said to be men of small understanding, brought up in the company of women and eunuchs and singing-girls.

The Sevillian court, especially during the reign of Al-Mu'tamid, was very gay and entertaining, as it was dominated by poets and musicians who were liberally paid.[23] Al-Mu'tamid himself was an artist who could sing and play the lute,[24] and his sons inherited their father's inclination. Al-Rashid himself not only kept a *citara* of singers, but played and sang himself, and succeeded in fathoming the little-known secrets of the art of music through his knowledge of mathematics.[25] The Sevillian court was also graced by famous

[18] Al-Makkari, II, page 565. [19] *Tekmila* (Centro), biography, page 2116.

[20] It is to be remembered that originally, in the Orient, *citara* meant the curtain behind which the musicians played, and afterward came to mean the group of performers, singers and players. In Spain the institution became such a commonplace that poets used the word as a simile; for instance, Ibn Abdon:

"And the birds in the verdure
warbled like singers behind the *citara*."

(Lerchundi and Simonet, *Chrestomatia*, page 125.)

[21] *Scriptorum Arabum loci de Abbadidis*, II, page 40, note.

[22] *Ibid.*, quoting *Kitab Al-Iktifa*, II, page 16.

[23] Dozy, *Histoire*, IV, pages 70, 149, etc.

[24] *Scriptorum Arabum loci de Abbadidis*, I, page 394.

[25] *Ibid.*, II, pages 40, 71, 422.

singers, one of whom was known as the Sicilian,[26] and there were also Abu Bekr of Seville and many others.

One incident will show the feeling for music among the Sevillians. The young Al-Mu'tamid undertook the direction of an army especially organized to combat Badis bin Habus of Granada. He set out with his soldiers and officers, and at one stage of the march, wishing to be amused by women singers, he sent some men to search for them, with the result that, in the end, the whole army had dispersed.[27] It is told of Ibn Mardanis, Prince of Valencia and Murcia, that he frequently invited the dignitaries of his state, entertaining them with song and dance and wine in abundance.[28] Even the kinglets farthest from the Andalusian districts caught the fashion and had their *citaras*. Of Hudail bin Racin, lord of Santa Maria (Teruel district), it is told that he took a notion to buy a certain singer at the very high price of three thousand gold coins, a sum which no other sovereign had been willing to pay, although this slave really merited the price, for she was a singer of first rank, graceful, elegant, intelligent, cultured, and witty, beside being an expert in medicine.[29] Often the possession of a singing slave-girl resulted in disputes, and sometimes even bloody conflicts between persons of high degree.[30] Among the few who were not thus allured was the Cid, who publicly censured the kings or factional leaders as being impassioned of wine, women, and song.[31] These palace traditions continued for a long time, for Ibn Al-Khatib, the Granada historian of the fourteenth century, in describing the political organization, speaks of poets and singers as forming part of the court hierarchy.[32]

[26] *Scriptorum Arabum loci de Abbadidis*, II, page 62.

[27] *Ibid.*, II, page 621.

[28] Dozy, *Recherches*, I, page 367.

[29] *Hollato*, page 181.

[30] Ibn Said, No. 80, pages 240 and 241. A sovereign of Malaga decapitated a governor of the town for not yielding to him a certain woman singer.

[31] The Cid publicly told the Moslems of Valencia: "*Yo non me aparto con mugeres nin a cantar nin a beuer, como facien uuestros sennores que los non podiedes veer*" (I do not withdraw myself with women either to sing or to drink as do your noblemen) (*Primera crónica general*, published by Ramón Menéndez Pidal; *Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Bailly-Baillière, Madrid, 1906, I, page 589).

[32] Al-Makkari (Bulak), IV, page 241.

The love for music was more than just a fashionable show on the part of a few foreigners who sought important positions in Spain. Ibn Tifilwit, an African of ancient Moorish tribe, who became a lord of Saragossa, also kept his group of singing-girls.[33] Moreover, eye-witnesses report a curious tale of the contagion of this musical passion among the soldiers and grandees who came into Spain from the rest of Europe.

In the year 1064 A.D. the Aragonese town of Barbastro was taken by an army made up of Normans and French. Each one of the principal knights was awarded a house in the city, with all it contained—women, children, furniture, fabrics, and money—and the power to do as he wished with the master of the house. One house was turned over to a certain count, before whom there appeared a Jew, commissioned to ransom the daughters of the former Moorish owner at any price. The Jew related his interview with the count, and the historian, Ibn Hayan, translated it textually in his chronicle, from which we give the following extract:[34] The Jew says that on reaching Barbastro he asked for this nobleman's house, and sought permission to enter, which was granted. There he found his host dressed in the best garments of the Moorish owner, and seated on the Moor's favorite couch. The furniture was all in its accustomed place, and the Count was surrounded by Moslem girls who were waiting on him. The Jew offered the Count large sums for the ransom of some of these maidens, to which the Count smilingly said that if that was all he had come for, he might as well depart, for he had no intention of selling the girls. The Jew adds: "I insisted, offering him his own price without bargaining, and he answered that he had no need for money or precious commodities, for he was well supplied, and he pointed out the immense riches to which he had fallen heir. Finally he said: 'I have so much that I aspire no further. But even supposing I had nothing and were offered all that has been shown here in exchange for my wife, I should not cede, for she is the daughter of the former owner, who was very eminent

[33] Ibn Khaldun, *Prolegómenos*, III, pages 426 and 427.

[34] From this chronicle it was copied by Ibn Bassam, and it has been translated by Dozy in his *Recherches*, third edition, II, pages 339 ff., especially pages 345 to 347.

among the Moslems. For that reason, apart from her charm and beauty, I have taken her as my wife, and I hope that she will give me descendants. Her Mussulman ancestors did the same with our women when they possessed themselves of this country. Now we do likewise. Thus do we succeed. Let us turn to something else.' Then, turning toward the nearest maiden, he said: 'Do you see that very beautiful girl? She was his singer, although his daughter. He was a libertine who customarily revived himself after a drunken orgy by listening to singing.' To the girl he said in broken Arabic: 'Take your lute and sing some songs for this gentleman.' The maiden took her instrument and seated herself to tune it. Tears were running down her cheeks, which the Count furtively dried. Then she began some verses which I did not really understand, and the Christian even less. But I was surprised and pleased to see the Count show great enthusiasm, as if he understood the words, though he continued drinking. Seeing that I could not attain my purpose, I left, but not without amazement at the women and wealth possessed by those Christians."

Most of these observations have reference to court life and people in high positions, and do not give a clear idea of the general diffusion of music among the Mussulman population of Spain. Cordovan customs of the time of Al-Mansur are shown by the fact that a girl's education included learning to play the lute, the *rabel*, the *manucordio*, the organ, and so forth, "in order to be a solace to her husband."[35] Interest in music varied in different districts and towns. Ubeda was said to be famous for the skill of its musicians, minstrels, and dancers, who were most dexterous in the sword dance, the playing of dice, and other farces.[36] There were, besides, performers and artists from the Orient who habitually came to the Peninsula, for the small rulers received them and paid them well. For instance, Al-Mu'tasim bin Somadih kept Africans, Egyptians, and Orientals.[37]

[35] *Enseñanza entre los musulmanes*, page 97. The great appreciation of this skill among the women must have contributed to the spreading of musical taste. Some singers, as we have seen, reached high positions, such as the daughter of Ziryab, who married the chancellor.

[36] Al-Makkari, II, page 146.

[37] *Idem*, II, page 179.

Of all these accounts the one that seems to me most vivid is that of an Oriental writer who must have been very neurasthenic. He gives a picture of Malaga, as clear as a photograph taken at noonday, showing the affection for music among the towns of Andalusia. We shall let him speak in his own words:[38] "I was in Malaga, a Spanish city, in the year 406 of the Hegira (1015 A.D.) and was housed for a long time by illness. Two friends, mindful of my delirium, cared for me tenderly. It was at night especially that I felt wakeful. All around my house there was an incessant jangle of singing, and of lutes, *tomburs*, and lyres, which disturbed me intensely and added to the restlessness and suffering caused by my illness. These toccatas and songs nailed themselves to my mind without hope of respite, so that I was filled with aversion for them, and would have liked to find a house away from all the noise. But this was difficult in Malaga, for the people are absolutely dominated by their passion for music. One night I awoke after dozing a little, and noticed that the tumult of odious voices and turbulent tunes had calmed down, leaving only a breath of sound, tranquil and lovely. I felt that my soul understood this music and could find repose in it, with none of the repugnance I had felt for the other. It was purely instrumental, without the human voice. Then it began increasing slowly in volume. I was drawn to it and disposed to listen even when it had reached the fullest possible strength. I found myself forgetting my misery in the emotional enjoyment, which almost caused me to imagine that the walls and floor were floating around me. And all this time there had been no sound of a human voice. I said to myself: 'For instrumental music, nothing could be more perfect. What kind of a voice will the musician have? How will it end?' Scarcely was the question asked before there came the sound of a woman's voice, clear and beautiful. I could not contain myself and got up, leaving my two companions sleeping. I opened the door of my room and followed the sound until I reached the part of the house whence I could overlook the neighbors. I saw a large garden with about twenty people in the center, seated in a row with sweets, fruits, and drinks before

[38] Ahmed bin Muhammad Al-Yemeni, *Hadicato-l-afrah* (Cairo edition), page 127. I owe this communication and others to my friend, Professor Asin, who has found them in the course of his reading.

them. The girl who was singing sat apart from the others, and held her listeners spellbound. She sang and sang, and I, hidden above, could watch without being seen. As she sang a verse, I learned it, till I knew quite a number. Finally I withdrew to my room, thanking God, as though I had come out of a great trouble and were no longer ill or suffering. The next morning I got up, and went to see a friend, the Ulema of Cordova, who was living in Malaga, and told him what had happened. I recited the verses and described the house. He smilingly answered: 'That is the house of the minister so and so, and the slave-girl comes from Bagdad, one of the best singers of Al-Mansur bin Abi Amir. She came into the possession of this minister after Al-Mansur's death. Those poems were written by the Spanish poet, Muhammad bin Carloman.' "[39]

Where else in the world was there such a phenomenon in the eleventh century? Only, I believe, in the districts of Andalusia and in Seville—smiling city of poetry and music.[40] In the presence of the Caliph Al-Mansur Yakub, the Sevillian, Ibn Zuhr (known in Spain as Avenzoar), and the Cordovan, Ibn Rushd (known in Spain as Averroes), were discussing the superiorities of their respective countries. To finish the talk, Ibn Rushd said to Ibn Zuhr: "I do not know why it should be so, but it is a fact that if a scholar dies in Seville his books are taken to Cordova to be sold; but if a musician dies in Cordova his instruments are sold in Seville."[41] Seville was really the center of Spanish music, particularly the densely populated quarter which Al-Mu'tamid beautified by obliging the inhabitants to whitewash the houses, especially those on the river bank, and this, with the gilded window-gratings, gave the district a seductive appearance. This part of the city was called, then as now, Triana, and it was here, on moonlight nights, that the most famous entertainments of the western world were celebrated. These entertainments are mentioned by a Mussulman writer who was in Seville shortly before the reign of Alfonso the Wise.[42]

[39] This shows that instrumental preludes were not brief, but long, preparing the audience for the wider reaches of expression in the vocal portions.

[40] Al-Makkari, I, page 128. [41] *Idem*, I, page 98.

[42] Ibn Said (MS 80, folio 138), writing at the beginning of the thirteenth century, describes this quarter of Seville and gives it this name which it still keeps.

CHAPTER XI · SPANISH COMPOSERS OF MUSIC :: NEW ANDALUSIAN FORM WHICH GREW POPULAR THERE AND SPREAD TO NORTH AFRICA AND THE ORIENT

From the preceding account it may be inferred that the Oriental school of music became acclimated in Spain not only because singers from the East introduced it in early times, but because they continued to come during the whole period of Moslem domination. Thus the Oriental influence in poetry, rhythms, and melodies was constant, and customs of the *citara*[1] and the use of wine during the concert[2] were identical; that is to say, all the essential and fortuitous elements of imitation were present. But the Spaniards were not contented to be mere executants, passively accepting Oriental music just as it was imported, for there were composers in the Peninsula who did original work. As an example I quote the following: "I had the pleasure of consulting (in Andalusia) with Abdu'l-Wahab bin Husain bin Jafar Al-Hajib, the most distinguished authority of his time in matters of fine singing, a man of great knowledge and an eminent poet with great nobility of thought and spirit. His life slipped by, happy in pleasant amusements. He played the lute better than anyone else, and was well acquainted with all types of music.

[1] In Ibn Hayan's account of the teachings of Ziryab, Oriental technicalities appear. In *Tekmila*, by Ibn Al-Abar, there is a story of a slave-girl, named Hind, belonging to Abdu-l-lah bin Moslema of Játiva, who was a scholar and a poet. She was invited by Abu Amir bin Yaneka to his house to play some *first takils*.

The various rhythmic types, *takil*, *ramel*, *hezej*, and *makhuri*, are mentioned in MS 538 in the Escorial Library, among the *risalas* (literary epistles) written by Spanish Moslems to refute Abu Amir bin García, who wrote to show the superiority of the non-Arabic peoples over the Arabic (folio 50). Other types also are mentioned, but unfortunately not described.

See also *Tauk Al-Hamama*, page 29.

[2] *Scriptorum Arabum loci de Abbadidis*, I, page 388. There were both men and women cup-bearers. Al-Makkari (II, page 109) describes a lovely spot in the province of Malaga where the guests were accustomed to drink during the sessions of singing, dancing, and instrumental music.

He wrote poems and set them to his own heartfelt music, of great merit and originality, for he had a natural gift in this way. On occasions when his invited guests failed him, Abdu'l-Wahab asked as many as ten members of his family, including his son and his nephew, Abdu-l-lah, and some servitors, to come to eat and drink. As they were all good singers, they could readily organize an impromptu concert and sing without ceasing, till Abdu'l-Wahab too was stirred with joy. Then he took the lute and sang to entertain his guests. He paid the flutist Bishera, who ordinarily accompanied him and who was one of the best players of the Orient, munificently, even presenting him with farms. Every singer coming from the Orient was inevitably told that he ought to meet Abdu'l-Wahab, and was received, entertained a long time, and given presents and garments; and in return Abdu'l-Wahab learned the stranger's songs and wonderful tales."[3]

Another musician, a lord of Toledo, deserves notice. His name was Abu'l-Husain, and he was the son of the Toledan minister, Abu Jafar Al-Wakashi. A friend who went to visit him tells the following story about him: "I was at his house, and in order to entertain me he hunted in the closet and brought out a lute, like those used when singing. But this lute sounded without anyone striking its strings. Abu'l-Husain began to sing an *anexir* which he had composed, and then a song—all this without my asking, for I should not have dared to propose such a thing. At the end I kissed his head and said: 'I do not know for which to thank you most, your courteous attention in doing what I had not even begged for, or the exquisite impression of the music.' Abu'l-Husain replied: 'That is an *anexir* by Khusrawani which I have just set to music.' "[4]

We cannot form even an approximate idea of the originality of these Spanish songs, for our information about them comes solely from people unfamiliar with the art, who use admiring phrases without giving technical descriptions. The Spanish Moslem artists were not mere imitators of Oriental art, but renewed and transformed it in many ways, thus preserving it from decadence. One proof of this

[3] Ibn Ar-Rakik in Al-Makkari, I, page 119.

[4] Al-Makkari, II, page 516. Khusrawani was a Persian poet of the tenth and eleventh centuries. (See Picci, *Storia persiana*, I, page 71.)

is the invention of the lyric patterns, *zejel* and *muwashah*, which were peculiar to the Peninsula.

The evolution of Oriental music in the Peninsula was just the opposite of that in the East. It will be remembered that there the first Arab composers worked on material drawn from their older neighbors, Persia and Byzantium. These musicians were born and bred in surroundings that were truly humble, were paid and applauded by the populace, and of necessity composed in forms that were simple and of the people. When, later, the focus of composition centered at Bagdad and music became a spectacle of palace life, paid for by kings and potentates, it grew more complex and became corrupted by pedantries of the courts, which brought about its decadence. The reverse was true in the Peninsula. Oriental music reached Spain through palace artists, with all the refinements of palace life, almost contemporaneously with its deterioration in the East. In assimilating this music, however, the Spanish people restored it to its former simplicity, bringing it out of the palaces into the plazas and turning it into a popular diversion. In this way it was not only adapted to the taste of the public, who paid for and extolled it, but its form was also molded by them to enable them to perform it in chorus, and this helped it to withstand decadent influences.

Some years after Ziryab brought the classic music of Arabia to Spain, in the time of Abdu'r-Rahman II, a reawakening of the national spirit began all over the Peninsula as a result of social and political causes. This happened among the Christian kingdoms in the north, and also in the southern regions dominated by the Cordovan Omayyads, and culminated in the overthrow of their rule during the reign of the Emir Abdu-l-lah. The latter, a somber and taciturn man, with his innate austerity and barrenness of spirit intensified by isolation in his capitol, tried to stop all diversions, licit or illicit, in Cordova, and both nobles and plebians remained songless.[5]

Then it was that a blind poet, Mocadem bin Moafa,[6] who lived

[5] Ibn Adhdhari, II, page 158.

[6] The name of this poet is found with different spellings in the old MSS, as well as in later studies. Dozy, in his *Histoire* (II, page 296), calls him Micdam (citing Al-Makkari, II, page 361). In the Oxford MS of Ibn Hayan, folio 48, obv., it is written Macum. But in other passages of the same he gives the correct form, as does Adabi, Biography 1386; Dozy, *Notices*, page 85, et cetera.

in the Andalusian town of Cabra, situated in the domains of Omar bin Hafsun, began to sing refrains which showed national characteristics. For these songs he employed the Romance tongue, current at that time among all the Andalusians. We know very little about this poet except his name and native land. Yet his fame was destined, as we shall soon see, to resound through all the later literatures of both Moslem and European peoples. The biographies concerning him are very brief and scarcely allude to the type of songs he invented. Ibn Bassam just mentions them, and confesses his embarrassment at referring to them at all, as they are unworthy of notice in such a serious piece of work as his. As a classicist, devoted to Arab forms, Ibn Bassam considered it beneath him even to speak of such a vulgarism as popular Romance literature in Andalusia.[7] In order to understand this new type we must seek elsewhere for information; for example, in the contemporaneous political and social media and the traces left thereby on the compositions of the later poets who adopted this style.

When the Arabs came to Spain they soon succeeded in conquering the whole Peninsula, but Oriental culture filtered in more slowly, gradually penetrating the towns and districts where the Arabs predominated and influencing certain superior classes who were clever at imitation. The Moslem capital, Cordova, where the monarch and high dignitaries lived and where public offices and testimonials were distributed, was the center of Oriental influences, commerce, and urban customs. Books of liturgy, forms of prayer, and traditions of the teaching of the Koran were to be found there, as well as Oriental scientific treatises. But thought, feeling, and speech change slowly. The Romance tongue was the speech of the common people of Cordova and of the palace, and was preserved in the tribunals until after the reign of Abdu'r-Rahman III. The higher classes in some towns, like Seville, became partially Arabic in character, because in them the Visigoth and Arab elements were mingled. But in the rest of the Peninsula, the mountain and country regions farther from the Arab centers, the population continued its national traditions long after the conquest.

[7] See my *Discurso*, written on becoming a member of the Royal Academy of History, page 12.

Nevertheless, the artistic qualities of Arabic poesy aroused the admiration of the Spaniards. In Cordova itself it became the fashion, even among the Christians, to learn, recite, and compose Arabic verses, and this poetry became one of the potent forces for assimilation and strength. The Arabs inflamed their soldiers on the battlefields and stirred the populace by poetic accounts of warlike deeds, which were also told in the plazas and streets by story-tellers, who thus aroused the popular admiration. But before the breakdown of the native traditions, the Omayyad Empire had already, after Abdu'r-Rahman II, suffered great losses, especially during the reign of Abdu-l-lah. Many districts and towns rebelled against Cordova and became independent; among them, Toledo, with its wild and turbulent populace, incapable of self-government or of obedience to anyone, a populace made up of the dregs of a proud but impoverished court, as is the case in all cities which have lost their status as capitals.[8] Others were Cuenca and the adjacent regions, whose masters, the Banu Musa bin Dhi-n-non, fought for their own cause;[9] Saragossa and Huesca, which had parted company under the Banu Kasi and Banu Ath-Thawil;[10] Murcia and Valencia, obeying principally Daysam and a few other lords, like those of Callosa and Lorca;[11] Algarbe, subject to a lord of Spanish blood who maintained a brilliant sway, with valiant horsemen luxuriously equipped;[12] Estremadura, which had become an independent seigniory under Abu Meruan, the Galician,[13] whose friends and vassals were nobles, like the Shoronbek who dominated the river-bottoms of the Tagus and Guadiana.[14] The province of Almeria had become a republic dedicated to ocean commerce,[15] and the southern part of Andalusia, Malaga, Granada, and Jaén, which formed the largest Peninsular

[8] Dozy, *Histoire*, I, page 181.

[9] Ibn Hayan (Oxford), folios 13 and 14, obv.

[10] Dozy, *Histoire*, I, page 182.

[11] Ibn Hayan (Oxford), folios 16 and 17; Ibn Al-Kutya, page 89.

[12] Ibn Hayan, folio 12, obv.

[13] Dozy, *Histoire*, I, page 183.

[14] Ibn Hayan, folios 17, rev., and 11, obv.

[15] *Idem*, folio 68, obv. and rev.

realm, obeyed a sultan who personified the anti-Arab protest. This was Omar bin Hafsun,[16] who, with the connivance of the Banu Kasi of Saragossa, was on the point of uniting most of the Peninsula under his scepter, and thus demolishing the power of the Omayyads of Cordova.

The reign of Abdu-l-lah was a critical period in which the truly Spanish nationalist spirit made a supreme effort against the political and social Islamizing forces. Most of the Andalusians had submitted to Islam and had even been converted, believing perhaps that it would not interfere with the continuation of their own customs; but when they realized the extent of the changes that were taking place, they reacted against the Arabizing party.[17] At times Moslem Spain verged toward the feudal system, due to the weakness of the Cordovan Empire and the lack of a central nucleus. This left a political decentralization in which each district set itself up independently, making a confused mixture of kingdoms governed by lords of various races and religions, interests and tendencies—in Seville, the Gothic-Arabic aristocracy; in Saragossa, Toledo, Badajoz, and Algarbe, the Spaniards. In many Arab and Berber castles and fortresses, there were nobles who covenanted alliances and treaties which were broken at any moment by internal conflicts.[18]

Under these circumstances it was impossible for any one nobleman to possess large, powerful armies with sufficient discipline to insure success. He had to depend on small groups for skirmishes in which the individual valor of chiefs or champions decided the for-

[16] Dozy, *Histoire*, I, pages 181 and 190. At the end of his life he became a Christian.

[17] After Abdu'r-Rahman III reconstructed the Empire there remained a residue of protest which resolved itself into a party that was merely literary and academic, that of the *Shu'ubites*, who supported the theory of the inferiority of the Arab race to European or Aryan races. It appears that the first to formulate these ideas was Ibn Al-Hasar, Cadi of the Banu Hammud, who died in 422 of the Hegira (1030 A.D.). The most famous *Shu'ubite* was Ibn García, a Basque, who became a Moslem and wrote a famous literary letter against the Arabs, which made a great impression in Spain. Many and famous writers dedicated themselves to refuting it (Ibn Said, MS 53, folios 43 and 73; Ibn Khair, page 419; Ibn Said, MS 80, folios 11, 12, etc.).

[18] Ibn Hayan (Oxford), folios 7 to 24.

tunes of war. It was the truly chivalrous period of Mussulman Spain. The names of the champions ran from lip to lip, and the feudal lords disputed among themselves for the right to their services.[19] Some of these champions, Spanish as well as Arabic, were also poets and went into battle reciting, contending both with weapons and verses. Later they themselves related their prowess, reviling their enemy, and these accounts were much applauded by the populace.

The groups of poets at first gathered only in the palaces of the Cordovan monarch, but later also around the provincial noblemen, and some poets belonged exclusively to their own tribe or party.[20] Abdu-l-lah, the Omayyad of Cordova, was quite generous to some poets in spite of the penurious economy in which he had to live. Among these were Abu Omar bin Abdi Rabbihi, author of *Ikd Al-Farid*, a work in which some verses of his own appear, in praise of the Omayyads. These reveal Arab pedantry rather than poetic fervor, in spite of his Spanish origin. Al-Kalafat was another poet at Abdu-l-lah's court, but he was a turncoat, for he sometimes served this sovereign, sometimes the king of Seville, or again wherever he received the highest pay.[21] The famous poet Ahmed bin Ibrahim bin Kolzom was in the habit of accompanying the general, Ibn Abi Abda, on his warlike expeditions. Some poets of the Kuraysh tribe of the Omayyad family itself served the Cordovan sovereign and Ubaydu-l-lah Al-Khalidi as well, in spite of his Spanish nationality.[22]

[19] In this period the historians give many accounts of the construction of castles and fortifications; Montesacro (Ibn Hayan, folio 45, rev.), Monzon (folio 89, rev.), Balaguer (folio 95), Huesca (folio 107), etc.

The chroniclers use the Arabic word meaning "knight" (*caballero* in Spanish) to indicate the warriors of superior rank (Ibn Hayan, folio 63). Ibn Hayan (folio 76) speaks of a military feat in which a few valiant knights attained a victory which was celebrated in poetry by Ibn Abdi Rabbihi. Owing to the popular narration of their exploits, the names of certain knights have become proverbial, for example, that of a friend of Omar bin Hafsun, called Moshtar (Ibn Hayan, folio 104).

[20] Ibn Hayan, folio 64. Judi was a celebrated knight and poet (Ibn Hayan, folio 44).

[21] Ibn Hayan, folios 9, rev., 98, obv.

[22] My source for these paragraphs is mainly the large Chronicle of Ibn Hayan (Oxford), referring to Abdu-l-lah's reign (folios 42, obv., to 105).

The king of Seville kept at his court both native and foreign poets. Ubaydis was secretary and court poet to Ibn Ashela, lord of Jaén, and also saw service with Daysam, lord of Murcia.[23] The knightly deeds of these distinguished warriors were preserved in the Arabic verses of their poets, and thus given a form in which they could easily be remembered. These epic stories seldom fail to mention the number of heroes who became distinguished or died in battle. Some of the tales became so popular that many phrases from them have remained as proverbs.

Poetic emulation went hand in hand with warlike emulation, and Abli, a poet of Spanish origin, wrote in Arabic against Asadi, an Arab poet who defended the Arab heroes, and both of these poets disputed in verse.[24] But these Arabic verses could make their effect only on a people who understood them. It would be necessary to resort to the national tongue if public favor was to be successfully won, for the general provincial Spanish public did not understand Arabic, much less the Arabic poetic form. In those regions where the un-Arabized Spanish element predominated, it may be easily imagined that there were Spanish chiefs who did not despise this means of court stratagem. As we have said, most of the important Andalusian nobles had poets in their retinues, and undoubtedly this custom was followed by Ibn Hafsun, who was for some time the most powerful of these lords, for the tales of his exploits became popular, and the epic about him even contained fables about his youth.[25]

The names of these poets do not appear in a single Arabic chronicle, for the Arab historians disdained writings of such popular origin and so far outside of classic tradition. So the poets themselves would have been the only source of information regarding these details. Much of their verse, for instance that of Mocadem of Cabra, was composed in the Romance language, and, perhaps for this reason, no original examples remain. Some of the works of other poets may have been translated into Arabic. We can easily

[23] He describes in his poems the warlike exploits of his master, Ibn Ashela, lauding them and the magnificence of his palaces, as if he were talking about one of the great rulers of the earth (Ibn Hayan, folio 7, rev.).

[24] Ibn Hayan, folio 46, rev.

[25] See my *Discurso*, pages 38 and 39.

believe that Gharbib wrote in the current tongue of Toledo, for he was a noble of that ancient Spanish court, which for a long time would not submit to government by Arab lords. The strongest indication of the presence of poets who wrote in the vulgate and who were in the service of the Spanish kings was the fact that Mocadem of Cabra made verses which manifestly were not in praise of the emirs of Cordova nor of the Arabized nobles. He wrote in the Romance tongue, and his verses were probably in honor of some nobleman under the influence of Romance culture, for Mocadem came from the district belonging to Omar bin Hafsun, who was, as will be remembered, strongly anti-Arab.

Mocadem's poetry was popular because of the language in which it was written and because the metrical system employed was based on a familiar type of refrain that the public could sing, as we shall later see. The classic Arabic music and poetry, current among Moslems and non-Moslems of Spain, had grown out of very ancient artistic forms which, because of their merit, naturally influenced the new type from the start, and especially its later development, for it was adopted by scholars habituated to Arabic poesy. Nevertheless, the new system was different from the classic Arab form, in which the verses consist of two hemistichs, every pair throughout a given figure using one rhyme, and all having the same metrical pattern. The new system had no hemistichs, but short rhymed lines of varying length and with various rhythms, although fitting a strict pattern indicated by the popular refrain,[26] which was the foundation of these compositions and the essence of the system. It is said of Mocadem that his metrical form was imperfect and that he did not use the various interlacings of rhymes that appear in the later poetry. Naturally the primitive form was simple, a pair of lines for the refrain, and a quatrain for the stanza, thus: *a a*, *b b b a*, *c c c a*, and so forth.[27] I

[26] The Arabic word for *estribillo* (refrain) as used by Ibn Bassam was not well understood by Hartmann, who, in his *Das arabische Strophengedicht*, page 91, expresses the notion that it meant "point of rest." As I have said in my *Discurso*, Ibn Kuzman determines the exact meaning of *estribillo*.

[27] None of Mocadem's compositions have been preserved, but the simplest form of *zejel*, as given above, is to be found implicitly or explicitly in almost every later composition of this type.

Ibn Khaldun's explanation of the *zejel* and *muwashah* does not seem to me to

shall leave further discussion of the growth of the new metrical pattern until we study the musical form of these songs, as I am convinced that the poetic form is to be explained by the music.

Mocadem was followed by various poets who imitated him.[28] The most conspicuous among them was a certain Ibn Abdi Rabbihi, who is, however, difficult to identify. Those who have read the text of Ibn Bassam will be inclined to recognize Ibn Abdi Rabbihi in the famous poet and scholar of that name (of Spanish blood and under the patronage of Hisham I), who was the author of *Ikd Al-Farid;* but of this we are not assured. This celebrated Ibn Abdi Rabbihi was very Arabic in his tendencies and followed the classic tradition; in his famous encyclopedia there is a chapter on poetic art without even a passing allusion to the Spanish *zejels* and *muwashahs.* Obviously he did not compose under a new system of rules which had been formed as a protest against those he professed. I believe that the Ibn Abdi Rabbihi who wrote verses in the style of Mocadem must have been the nephew of the former, a son of his brother. This nephew was named Abu Omar Said bin Ibrahim bin Abdi Rabbihi; he was a physician and poet[29] who died in 342 (953 A.D.). His tendencies were different from his uncle's and even opposed to them. He studied the Greek sciences, and was a philosopher rather than a courtier, for he was accused of rudeness in his manner and conversation. The following tale is told of him: The fame of Ibn Abdi Rabbihi's knowledge reached Abdu'r-Rahman III, who desired to test the science of this philosopher, and indicated to

fit the case. He states that the *muwashah* was invented first as a more literary and beautiful style, and that later, as it spread, the more popular *zejel* came into being. The first man to distinguish himself in this form was Ibn Kuzman. Dozy, Schack, and others have all followed Ibn Khaldun in treating of these literary types. The name *muwashah* seems to me never to have been well explained, but I believe the proper interpretation to be the one given by Ibn Sida, who says, in his *Al-Mukhasis,* that it means a necklace of varicolored pearls. Scholars were fond of giving names, as of pearl necklaces or precious stones, to literary works.

[28] The names of several imitators or followers of Mocadem seem to me badly copied or altered as they appear in the text of Ibn Bassam, published in my *Discurso.* [See also note, Spanish edition, page 66.]

[29] *Tekmila* (Centro edition), page 544.

the uncle that he should bring him to the palace. In his conversation with the sovereign, Ibn Abdi Rabbihi was discourteous enough not to use the Arabic customary among well-educated people, but instead a coarse dialect, which so disturbed the Caliph that he expelled him from his court.[30] Ibn Abi Usaybia[31] says that Ibn Abdi Rabbihi went blind toward the end of his life. Perhaps it was then, distant from the court which he hated, that he dedicated himself to making verses in this gross language of which he was fond. (Even though the historians do not say what this gross language was, it may be supposed to have been Romance Spanish, seeing that common spoken Arabic was in use even among the haughtiest, and everyone would have considered him boorish because of his preference for the Romance tongue.)

The court poet of Al-Mansur, Al-Ramadi,[32] followed this philosopher in the use of the new poetic form. This Arab nickname, Al-Ramadi, was merely a translation from the Romance name by which he was known in Cordova, Abu Chenis, that is, "The Ashy-Colored One." Because of his intimacy with the Christians of Cordova, especially with one youth whom he sought at the Christian church, he was suspected of heterodoxy, particularly as, before drinking, he used to make the sign of the Cross over the cup. This, nevertheless, did not prevent his being known among the common people and the nobles. He wrote in classic as well as popular style, and his works include verses in praise of Al-Mansur. He died in 413 of the Hegira (1022 A.D.). He introduced certain novelties into the popular form which Mocadem had begun, for it was apparently he who multiplied the crossing of rhymes at the pauses or caesuras and espe-

[30] Ibn Said, MS 80, folio 20.

[31] Part II, page 44.

[32] Al-Hijari, according to Ibn Said, MS 80, folio 208, affirms that Al-Ramadi took this nickname from a farmhouse in Silves, called Ramada. But the Cordovan, Ibn Pascual (Asila, Biography 1376), says that he was nicknamed Abu Chenis from the Romance word *chenis*, which means ashes.

Ibn Said (MS 80, folio 208, rev.), in citing this poet, called Abu Omar Yusuf bin Harun Al-Ramadi Al-Kindi, compares him with Amiru'l Kais and Mutanabbi, famous Oriental Arab poets. His biography is to be found in Al-Makkari, II, pages 247 and 248; Ibn Khallikan, III, page 534; Adabi, Biography 1451; Ibn Pascual, page 1376.

cially in the strophe.[33] But we cannot be certain of the improvements made by this great poet, for as far as I know no single poem of his remains.

The poet who is said to have brought the Andalusian metric system to its greatest perfection was Ubada bin Ma-As-Sama,[34] who died in 416 A.H. according to Adabi,[35] or in 419 according to Ibn Pascual.[36] This perfection consisted in rectifying the bad habits of the common poets, who used this class of verse, and above all in having introduced greater variety into the rhyme patterns. These forms may be studied in some of his compositions which have come down to us, like those found in the work of Ibn Shakir.[37] Among them are *muwashahs* with refrain and stanza, which extended to ten and eleven syllables, thus, those of ten, *a b a b*, *c d c d c d a b a b* (five stanzas), those of eleven, *a b c d e*, *f g f g f g a b c d e* (five stanzas); that is to say, a long refrain with varied rhythms and a stanza with subdivided ternary element and independent rhymes in each strophe, beside the part whose rhymes are the same throughout the composition as well as in the refrain. This kind of poetry was increasingly esteemed because of the artistic and elegant combinations introduced by Ma-As-Sama, whose compositions attained greater renown than his name and supplanted the poems of his predecessors.[38] Thus a lyric system of *zejels* and *muwashahs* had been developed at the beginning of the fifth century of the Hegira (eleventh century A.D.), which involved every complexity from the quatrain *a a a b*, the simplest pattern, to the pattern *f g f g f g a b c d e*.

In the time of the Amirids, who succeeded Al-Mansur, attempts were made to introduce into Spain further popular forms from the Orient; for example, the *mawali* of the East was imitated in certain

[33] Ibn Bassam, I, folio 124, obv.

[34] Ibn Bassam, *ibid.*; Al-Makkari, I, page 187.

[35] Biography 1123.

[36] Biography 923.

[37] *Kitab Fuat Al-Okian*, I, page 254.

[38] Ubada was the author of a history of Spanish poets (now lost) from which Ibn Bassam may have taken the list of those who early cultivated the *muwashah*. (See Pons, *Historiadores y geógrafos*, page 110.)

compositions of the poet Abu Uthman bin Said, who was known by the Romance nickname of "The Whale."[39] But these types do not seem to have taken root in Spain.[40]

On the other hand, the *zejel* as a type was accepted by eminent poets, who, though quite able to write in perfect classic form, yielded to the temptation of following the native Spanish pattern,[41] which had reached the point of an ingenious poetic mechanism. The great poet, Ibn Labanna, did not disdain the *muwashah* for his praises of Al-Rashid, son of Al-Mu'tamid of Seville.[42]

As the type was perfected, its vogue increased, especially under the more favorable political and social conditions in the Peninsula. It took a still firmer hold on popular favor during the period when the nationalist and regional spirit of the local factions was on the increase and was chosen as a medium by many people of talent. But in the time of the Almoravides this literary form shone in its greatest splendor. Various distinguished poets were together at one of the frequent tournaments—the Blind Man of Tudela, Ibn Baki,

[39] Ibn Said, MS 80, folios 88, rev., and 89, obv. This Romance name was written in various ways; in Adabi (Biography 807) these readings are given: *el pollito*, "the chicken"; *el pollino*, "the donkey." Ibn Said said that Abu Uthman was a whale, and explained the Romance word by an Arabic word meaning "sea-monster." Romance words are almost always altered in Arabic manuscripts.

[40] Before this, Ibn Hani (Muhammad Al-Azdi, a Sevillian) had composed some poems with crossed rhythms unlike those in the *zejels* and *muwashahs* (Ibn Hani the Andalusian, *Diwan* [Beirut edition, 1326], pages 27, 72, and 129). This unfortunate bard was assassinated, while drunk, in a street of Barca (Tripoli) in the year 362 A.H.

[41] This would tend to prove the existence of a strong popular current of development paralleled later in Christian Spain in the ballads. Ibn Hazam, in his *Kitab al-Fisal* (I, page 153), describes the groups that collected in the highways to hear men and women of little talent tell more or less fictitious stories. It is to be remembered also that there were reciters of verses who followed an old Arab custom of telling their tales in the public streets. There were men who could recite hundreds of compositions (René Basset, *Poesie arabe anteislamique*, Paris, Leroux, 1880).

[42] Ibn Said, MS 53, folio 78; MS 80, folio 262; Al-Makkari, II, pages 279 and 513; Ibn Shakir, II, page 326; Ibn Khaldun, *Prolegómenos*, III, page 424. [These references to other *muwashah* writers are quoted more fully in the Spanish edition, pages 67 to 68.]

Al-Abiad, and others[43]—and they agreed to compete in the composition of a *muwashah*. It was their unanimous opinion that the Blind Man of Tudela had won the contest over all.[44] His name was Abu Jafar Ahmed bin Horaira, and he was an excellent poet, popular all over Spain. He died in the year 535 of the Hegira (1140 A.D.). On account of his blindness he needed a guide, and this service was rendered by another great and popular poet, Abu'l-Kasim Al-Hadrami, best known by his nickname of "The Blind Man's Staff." He became a critic of the first rank, famous for his subtlety and poetic skill, and was the composer of many notable *zejels*.[45]

The ready popularity of this poetry undoubtedly stimulated various men distinguished in other directions to dedicate themselves to it, resulting in much popular enthusiasm. One of those who enjoyed well-merited fame was a physician, Abu Bekr, of the Ibn Zuhr family, who were celebrated in the annals of medicine. His *zejels* and *muwashahs* were considered so perfect that they were referred to by other authors as models, and Ibn Said quotes them with encomiums.[46] We have still a few examples of the work of some of these men, beside the judgments passed on them by their contemporaries and successors, but no real idea can be formed of the

[43] Al-Makkari, II, page 275. Al-Abiad had a disastrous ending; he was put to death by the Emir of Cordova because of a satire which he wrote against the Emir.

[44] Ibn Said, MS 53, folio 94; Al-Makkari, II, page 275. Adabi gives the biography of the Blind Man of Tudela, mentioning only the form of the *kasidas* in connection with him (Biography 429).

[45] Ibn Said, MS 80, folio 134. Abu Bekr Yahya bin Baki of Cordova (whom we have already mentioned) was a bohemian vagabond wandering from city to city and living in misery, but he was also an excellent poet, very celebrated and most accomplished. It is said of the Almoravides that they were ignoramuses to have let a poet of Ibn Baki's talent live in poverty during their régime (Ibn Khaldun, *Prolegómenos*, III, page 425).

[46] Ibn Said (MS 80, folios 125 and 126) copies two or three as models of beauty. Ibn Khaldun (*Historia Universal*, I, page 520) also lauds Abu Bekr Ibn Zuhr. Al-Marrakoshi (page 63) in speaking of this poet says that he was the most distinguished writer of *muwashahs*, which he would like to quote were it not for the fact that they belong to a type which, because of its commonness, was not usually cited in a history like his. (Under the circumstances it is not surprising that many such compositions have been lost.) Abu Bekr was recognized as a master in the Orient, as will be shown later.

fertility of their genius. Ibn Kuzman[47] appears to be the only poet whose work remains in its entirety, on which account he was believed to be the earliest and the most famous. In the prologue to his collection,[48] which he himself gathered together, he tells us interesting facts about the vicissitudes of this lyric type in Spain. He mentions the fact, which we have already inferred from the foregoing enumeration of poets, that there were two currents; the one popular and crude in words and subjects, careless in form and structure, and fit to be enjoyed only by uncultivated people; the other erudite, elegant, and beautiful, but pedantic, both in subject-matter and language, which was different from that conversationally used in Andalusia. Thanks to the efforts of these cultivated people, the more classic songs had grown in complexity, while the spontaneity of the phrases had been tortured into geometric formulas.

On account of the use of the much-disdained vulgate, hardly any compositions of this first current remain, although they were widely known; we therefore have, so far as I know, no examples of Mocadem, Ibn Abdi Rabbihi, and other early writers. On the other hand, of the second type, commended for its exquisite and graceful forms, there are many extant, though the common people found them insipid and lacking in grace and spontaneity.

Ibn Kuzman, after studying the works of his predecessors, wished to fuse the two currents, keeping the good qualities of each. He considered it pedantic to use classic Arabic with its inflections,

[47] Ibn Said (MS 80, folios 3, 51, 74) gives some information about the noble Cordovan house of the Banu Kuzman. In the time of Al-Mansur, the scholar, Abu'l-Asbag Isa bin Kuzman, was charged with the literary instruction of the Caliph Hisham Al-Muwayad. According to Ibn Bassam, Abu Bekr Muhammad Abdu'l-Melik bin Isa bin Kuzman was the first who brought distinction to the family. He was called The Elder, and was secretary to Al-Mutawakkil, king of Badajoz. Our poet was also Abu Bekr Muhammad, and to distinguish him from his predecessor he was called The Younger. Ibn Said said that this Ibn Kuzman began early to devote himself to making verses in classic form and using the inflections of the grammarians. But he found that he could not in this way compete with other poets, especially with Ibn Khafaja de Alcira, a man of great inspiration, profundity, and fertility of imagination. Therefore he determined to specialize on the *zejels* in Andalusian vulgate, and in this class he achieved the leadership.

[48] Published by Baron David de Gunzburg, Berlin, 1896.

in poetry destined to be sung by many people, and felt that the language used for a poem should be intelligible to all. That is to say, he favored the use of the ordinary speech of the day, but refined and corrected. In order to interest the public, the subjects should be piquant scenes, not rhetorical, but gay and smiling, like those of the street musicians. The form and structure was to have all the elegance and finish of erudite work, but be veiled with naturalness, as if the poems had grown spontaneously and without effort. Ibn Kuzman was not the first to realize the type, for he had been preceded by an eminent artist who did not come from the sophisticated element of the people. The name of this poet, Akhtal bin Nomara, does not appear in any literary history, but Ibn Kuzman himself records it in speaking of the model he used. In the poems of this master, Ibn Kuzman found the perfections to which he aspired: natural language, spontaneous and expressive without pedantry; themes of real charm; strict form and easy transitions. In all these he considered Nomara as the standard-bearer of the *zejel*-writers of Andalusia, in contrast to the rabble of conceited stylists. Ibn Khaldun lauds Ibn Kuzman for the sweetness of his style, his elegant way of expressing his thoughts, and the beauty of his compositions, and Ibn Kuzman thought of himself as successful in his artistic selection. But, in reality, his poetry is so saturated with the vices of the popular current that they preserve the shamelessness of the tavern and the indecencies of language belonging to the worst quarters of Cordova. If Ibn Kuzman, desirous of purifying this type of song, has kept in his own *zejels* so much roughness and coarseness, what must have been the extremes of the common Andalusian songs?

It is to be understood that this coarseness did not affect the metrical patterns, which were exquisite and marvelously complex, without precedent in any earlier literature. The poems of Ibn Kuzman and others of the same type were constructed with a refrain or little strophe that was thematic and with stanzas of from four to twelve verses in various combinations.[49]

[49] The *zejel* writers, Isa Al-Belid, Abu Omar Az-Zahid (a Sevillian), Abu'l-Hasan Al-Mokri (of Denia), and Abu Bekr bin Martin were Ibn Kuzman's friends and contemporaries, his companions in diversions and feasts and frequent joyous excursions to the environs of Seville, but none of them equaled him (Ibn Khaldun, *Prolegómenos*, III, pages 436 and 437). His nearest compeer in merit was Mag-

Continually growing in favor, the Andalusian lyric system was followed by the greater number of Spanish Moslem writers, some of whom alternated between the two forms.[50] Ibn Said records that a writer of Seville, Al-Haitam, dictated to three copyists, improvising rapidly, to one *kasidas*, to another *muwashahs*, and to a third *zejels*.[51] The desire to copy these popular poetic forms reached such a pass that there were writers who imitated in *zejel* rhythm the children's songs of Malaga.[52] The fashion of writing this type of popu-

dalis, famous for the spontaneity and ease of his versification (Al-Makkari, II, pages 261 and 262). Ibn Khaldun (*Historia*, I, page 525) speaks of this poet and says that his nickname was not Arabic. His Arab name was Abu Abdu-l-lah bin Al-Haj. After describing him as an inspired poet, Ibn Khaldun quotes one of his most famous *zejels*. He excelled Ibn Kuzman fundamentally, for the latter heeded most the idea, while Magdalis cared most for the phrase.

[50] Al-Makkari (II, page 232) and Ibn Said (MS 80, folio 303) state this of Abu Muhammad Al-Bahili.

[51] Ibn Said, MS 80, folio 120; Al-Makkari, II, page 257.

[52] Ibn Said, MS 80, folios 233 and 234. This author has preserved the *zejel* of Abu'l-Hasan bin Salem in which he describes the river of Malaga, using the form peculiar to the songs of the boys about the town.

Even at the risk of making mistakes because of the worn-out state of the copy of Ibn Said's MS which I am using, I am going to transcribe this poem in Latin characters, so that the metric pattern may be seen:

Biguad R*aya*
Ajla adar at*asab* } Refrain

Ama tarah m*ofza*
Mitlo-sahab alm*orza*
Bir-rud ad m*ochza* } First stanza
Saca R*aya*
Min safu ma-ssa*hab*

Alaih hits el mod*ama*
Undor fi sacl l*ama*
Jaf-ar-riad hem*ama* } Second stanza
Facam jat*aya*
Madat lo cal *harab*

Et cetera.

As may be seen, this may be schemed as follows: *a b c c c a b d d d a b*, etc.; that is, five-line stanzas.

lar song spread even to the Moslem and Jewish women. As examples the following may be cited: Om Al-Kiram, daughter of Al-Mu'tasim bin Somadih, king of Almeria, who wrote letters in this style to her lover Al-Asmai,[53] a slim youth of Denia; and also Kasmuna, a Jewish poetess who composed *muwashahs* in collaboration with her father Ismael.[54] Within the Jewish communities there were also other excellent poets of this kind. Noteworthy among them was Ibrahim bin Sahel of Seville.[55] Even the Mozarabic Christians copied these songs; among them Ibn Al-Margari of Seville is famous.[56] The passion for versifying communicated itself to the most religious men, and ascetics and mystics of Andalusia wrote in this vein.[57] The vogue of these songs reached even to the farthest corners and provinces of Spain, all of which had their popular poets in this class.[58] Examples still exist of the best work of most of these poets.

Seville was the town which produced the greatest number of graceful and inspired poets.[59] We need not be surprised by the existence of a multitude of popular poets in a city like Seville during

[53] Al-Makkari, II, page 538. [54] *Idem*, II, page 356.

[55] *Idem*, II, page 351. [56] *Idem*, II, page 351.

[57] Ahmed bin Wakil, disciple of the famous Ibn Al-Arif, wrote *muwashahs* (Al-Makkari, I, pages 417 and 872) as did also the celebrated Abu'l-Hasan Ash-Shestor of Guadix, who wrote with astonishing facility and spontaneity, and the venerable Muhiyu'd-Din bin Al-Arabi of Murcia has no end of them in his collection (*idem*, I, pages 580 and 583). This should not surprise us, for, as we have already shown, music was one of the media employed by the Islamic mystics in the Oriental districts, especially among those who had reached the degree of purification where music was intended to aid in withdrawing the soul from the influence of the senses and freeing it from bodily fetters so as to commune with the Divine. This was attained by the emotion aroused by music. These mystics affirm that there was a prophet among the Israelites who prepared himself to receive the celestial revelations by "listening to music sung by sweet and lovely voices" (Ibn Khaldun, *Prolegómenos*, I, page 236).

[58] [A list of these provinces and of some of their poets is given in the Spanish edition, page 70.]

[59] [The names of some of these are given in the Spanish edition, page 70.] The words of Ash-Shecundi may be easily believed. He says: "The classic Arab school and the popular Spanish one of *muwashahs* and *zejels* each have so many followers that even if they were spread out over all North Africa, they would still make a crowd."

the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the whole Peninsula was swarming with them. Already in the twelfth century (year 591 of the Hegira) many versifiers of all varieties, classic and non-classic, had presented themselves before Yakub Al-Mansur during his trip about Spain. They came in such numbers to felicitate him on his warlike success that he found himself in the predicament of having to limit their recitations to the first two or three verses of each composition.[60] But even before that, in the time of the celebrated minister Al-Mansur bin Abi Amir, it was necessary to create a special bureau of the administration to classify and pay the poets according to the merit of their work. The bureau was under the direction of a great literary critic. Al-Mansur was accompanied on his warlike expeditions by as many as forty poets of all classes, charged with the recording of his prowess.[61]

The nomadic, bohemian poets and musicians who wandered from city to city were so numerous that there was a special designation for their kind. Ibn Said calls them repeatedly the *ahdab*, a word explained by Al-Makkari as meaning that they were people fond of jokes, yarns, and cheerful verses, many of which were high-colored, and formed a type widespread in Andalusia, called *haceli.*[62]

The flame of this poetry shone brilliantly in Granada during the time that this kingdom remained alone and independent as the bulwark of Islamism in Spain. Some scholars, even grave and learned grammarians like the Andalusian Abu Hayan bin Hayan, made it their pastime to write these popular Spanish verses.[63] The form endured as the ordinary and familiar one in Granada, and Ibn Khaldun (fourteenth century) tells us[64] that the type of poetry cultivated in that town when he visited it was the *zejel,* with classic meters and song form, and the vulgate for language: this they called *zejeli.*

[60] Al-Makkari, II, page 540.

[61] Adabi, Biography 890.

[62] Al-Makkari, I, page 298. In Europe the imitations of this type were called *gaya ciencia* (minstrelsy). This class, as to subject-matter, is very ancient and popular in Moslem Spain. Ibn Al-Kutya says that the authorities of Cordova, to weaken the warlike spirit of the rebellious Spaniards, encouraged the learning of the Bacchic compositions of the poet Abu'l-Hasan bin Hani (page 94).

[63] Ibn Shakir, II, page 352. [Other names are given in the Spanish edition, page 71.]

[64] *Historia,* I, page 527.

Even after the reconquest of Granada it was in use among the Moriscos. Father Alcalá alludes to it in various places in his grammar.

Of this abundant popular Spanish literature, many scattered examples remain, some incomplete and some in faulty copies; but the greater number have been lost, in spite of the interest which Spaniards have had in collecting the most graceful and witty, such as the works of Abu Ali Hasan bin Abi Nasar Adh-Dhabag, who was famous for his satires against the social standards of his day.[65]

There is no doubt that poetry of this type was sung, for this fact is often implied by various writers. It is a question whether the indigenous Spanish music alone was used for this kind of song, or Oriental music, possibly with modifications which had been known in Spain since the beginning of the ninth century, when Ziryab was alive. The historians tell us nothing in detail, but as, at the beginning of the tenth century, when this new type grew up, Oriental Arab music had already extended itself over the Peninsula,[66] one may suspect that this was used, though with alterations. For when Eastern music reached Spain, it was in the form of monodic songs—that is, songs for solo voice—whereas the new form was choral and based on the refrain, the portion sung by the chorus. This new disposition of melodic phrases modified the structure of the songs in some ways, at least so far as to accompany the music to the alternations between the soloist and the chorus, and to establish relations which facilitated the combination.

Moreover, the pattern of the primitive *zejel*, *a a a b*, was subdivided, making complicated cross-rhythms, reaching sometimes stanzas of eleven or twelve or even fifteen lines in which various distinct rhymes are alternated, apart from the refrain. All this had to be done with due regard to the melodic phrases. Perhaps the music followed in this same way. For the quatrain, *a a a b*, the pattern would have coincided, and for the subdivided type the same

[65] Ibn Said, MS 80, cites this book several times on folios 237 and 238, where he inserts various *zejels* of this poet, the subjects of which are the mockery of a physician, also of a woman, et cetera. On folio 112 he copies various *zejels* of the Sevillian ascetic Abu Amer.

[66] Even the Oriental terms were used with their original significance, *nuba* and *ador*. See Al-Makkari, II, page 177, where they are used meaning "turn."

crossings would have taken place. This would explain the fact that various poets wrote different words in the same metrical form, for use with music that was already known, as Ibn Kuzman states a number of times.

Various composers are said to have been the originators of this type of song.[67] But the most prolific and renowned of all was the philosopher, Ibn Bajja, who was an artist not only in execution, but on the theoretic side as well. He possessed both natural and acquired gifts, an agreeably colored and well-trained voice, also great skill in playing the lute. He wrote a book of which Al-Makkari said that it made all its predecessors useless. Among western Moslems he was even compared with Al-Farabi (previously referred to in the East). Ibn Khakan, the pedantic author of *Collares de Oro* (*Golden Necklaces*), hated Ibn Bajja for his philosophy and suspected him of heresy. In order to revile him, he suggested whence came his inspiration, saying: "He spent his life playing and singing; he commercialized music, and his ungoverned passion for music was such that he followed after any farm hand he heard singing as he led his animals to water. He wasted his time listening to music, without a moment for other occupations. This was the foundation of his fame."[68] This shows that Ibn Bajja drew his inspiration from popular Spanish melodies. It is known also that he taught slave-girls to sing *muwashahs*, especially a slave-girl belonging to Ibn Tifilwit, governor of Saragossa. These quotations perhaps account for the fact that some historians say that Ibn Bajja was the inventor of the popular airs sung in Moslem Spain.

[67] The Granadan, Abu'l-Husain Ali bin Al-Hamara, was a great connoisseur of musical science, an able composer, and skillful enough to make his own lute (Al-Makkari, II, page 517). Ishak bin Simeon, Cordovan Jew, was a marvel at composing different kinds of melodies, of different schools and methods, besides being a good singer and instrumentalist (Ibn Said, MS 80, folios 25 and 26). He was in the habit of playing for festivities at which the wine-cups passed frequently. He wrote various and appealing songs about wine and the lute. The physician Yahya bin Abdu-l-lah Al-Bahdaba took a notion to compose very original *zejels* accompanied by wind instruments, like the horn, instead of by strings. The famous *zejel*, called *El volador* ("The Flyer"), which Ibn Said inserts, belongs to this class (Ibn Said, MS 80, folios 5 and 6).

[68] See the article by Asin, "*El filósofo zaragozano Avempace*," *Revista de Aragón*, I, page 238; also Al-Makkari (Bulak edition), IV, page 201.

The art of making instruments also reached a high state of development in Andalusia. Ash-Shecundi (who lived in Seville in the thirteenth century) tells us about the instruments in use in that city, enumerating the following: the *khayal,* the *carrizo* (reed), the lute, the *rota,* the *rabel* (rebec), the *kanun* (psaltery or harp), the *munis,* the *quenira* (type of zither), the guitar, the *zolami* (oboe), the *shokra,* and the *nura.* The two last-mentioned are flutes, one deep-toned, a baritone, and the other high, a soprano; and there was also the pastoral flute. He adds that these instruments were also to be found in other districts, but nowhere as abundantly as in Seville. He also says: "If these instruments are in use in North Africa, it is because they were brought from Spain."[69]

If instruments were exported from Spain to Africa, it is natural that the music should have gone also. Ibn Kuzman prides himself that his songs flew so swiftly about the Moslem countries that three months after their appearance they could be heard as far away as Irak. This statement at first sight seems like Andalusian hyperbole, but Ibn Said testifies that the *zejels* of Ibn Kuzman might be heard more frequently in Bagdad than in Andalusia.[70] To have reached Bagdad, it is fairly obvious that these songs must have been sung in the intervening countries.

In the first centuries of Moslem domination, Eastern culture came to Spain, with books of religion, science, and the arts. The higher cultural level in the East inclined the flow toward the West, but later the flow of culture changed and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it turned in the opposite direction. An astonishing number of Spanish theologians, mystics, and physicians in the East are enumerated in the great literary work of Al-Makkari, and the impression they made was profound. In demonstrating Moslem science, the great Oriental authors began to echo, as interesting, the opinions of the Spanish savants, and the distinction which fell to Spanish science in the East communicated itself also to its gay, sparkling literature and to the graceful popular songs. Many dis-

[69] Al-Makkari, II, page 143.

[70] Ibn Khaldun, *Prolegómenos,* III, page 438. This might well be true, for the works of Ibn Kuzman which have been preserved are found in copies made in the Orient.

tinguished writers emigrated to the East, where, because of their wide experience, they were able to help in spreading these forms of poetry. Outstanding among them was Ibn Zuhr, a physician of great reputation, who, after living in the Levantine provinces of Spain (he was a native of Játiva) and then in Denia, went to Bagdad in the exercise of his profession. He called himself Abu Meruan Ibn Zuhr and was known as an inspired author of *muwashahs*.[71] A disciple of the celebrated Spanish grammarian, Shalaubin, wrote notable *muwashahs* in praise of the Spanish kings. His name was Abu Bekr Muhammad As-Sadafi, and later he, too, went to the Orient.[72]

The Spanish type of composition must have caused an agreeable impression, for various Eastern scholars wrote works dealing exclusively with explanations of this metric system and giving Spanish examples as models for imitation. Ibn Galib was right when he said, in pondering over the excellencies of the Spanish genius, that the *zejel* type was a Spanish invention, and he added that it was accepted and imitated in the East.[73]

When the Spanish metric system was introduced into foreign

[71] Al-Makkari, I, pages 623 ff.

[72] Ibn Wakil, the ascetic generally known as Ibn Al-Uclesi (from Uclés) (Al-Makkari, I, page 872), Muhiyu'd-Din bin Al-Arabi, and a host of mystics who wrote songs of this kind also went to the East to end their days. [Further names are given in the Spanish edition, page 73.]

[73] Al-Makkari, II, page 105. Various Oriental scholars discussed this type of song with the idea of imitating it or introducing it into their own countries. The best known of these was Ibn Sana-l-Molk of Egypt, whose work has principally served as guide to the most scholarly modern studies published in Europe on this subject. Even before this author wrote, the Andalusian form had already penetrated into Persia. (See Browne's *A Literary History of Persia.*) There are other, later books, such as the one by the Mameluke, Muhammad bin Hasan bin Azakir, of which there is a copy in the Escorial Library. [This book is described at length in the Spanish edition, page 73, and the names of others on the same subject are also given.] This poetry not only continued to influence the scholars of the Orient, but became popular also in some regions of Persia and even India. James Darmesteter (in his book, *Chants populaires des Afghans*, Paris, 1888 and 1890, page 194), in treating of the modern popular poetry of Afghanistan, refers to stanzas of four lines called *car baita* or quatrain, and says that these are known as *musamat*. [See Spanish edition, page 74.]

countries, it was used by the native poets and lost its primitive purity. Egyptians, Syrians, and others began to take liberties with the model, so that many of their compositions, while in theory imitating the Andalusian lyrics, really overstepped the boundaries of the form.[74]

For the Africans and Orientals the charm of these songs must have lain in the music which accompanied the words, rather than in the form and import. As is well known, the Hispano-Arabic dialect in which they were written seems overrun with Romance words which could not have been understood outside of Spain. Ibn Khaldun[75] tells us that the Orientals so little understood the speech of the Spaniards and Moroccans that the poetry of the common people could be comprehended only by the inhabitants of the districts in which it was written.

Therefore if, in spite of the differences of language, the metrical pattern was accepted, it is probable that the music was found agreeable. And it may be affirmed that from the beginning of the fourth century of the Hegira (twelfth century A.D.) Tunis was already a tributary of Andalusia in musical matters. At that time a celebrated Sevillian philosopher and composer, Omeya bin Abdu'l-Aziz bin abi Salt, was living there. He set the words of Tunisian songs to music,[76] and the inhabitants learned them from him and popularized them. His name was long remembered with affection. Ibn Said,[77] who lived early in the thirteenth century A.D., says that in his day these songs were sung in Tunis. The Tunisians still sing them today, and are persuaded that they were Spanish originally, and call them songs of Granada.[78] This confirms what Ibn Khaldun said in the fourteenth century, that Spanish music exerted great influence, visible in his time, on all of North Africa. That it still lasts today in all of those

[74] Ibn Khaldun tells us that the Moroccans began to use the new type in the language of their own common folk. [See also Spanish edition, page 74.]

[75] *Prolegómenos*, III, pages 454 and 455.

[76] Al-Makkari, I, page 530. Ibn abi Salt is supposed to have died in 520 or 528 of the Hegira.

[77] MS 80, folio 119. He sets the date of Ibn abi Salt's death as 546.

[78] Hasan Husni Abdu'l-Wahib, *Le Developpement de la musique arabe en Oriente, Espagne et Tunisie*, page 14. (Pamphlet published 1918.)

countries is shown by the traditions gathered together by the scholars who go to study Arabic music in Egypt and North Africa.[79] All speak of Granadan music as gay, and say that it is often performed by African musicians. The modern Arab writers who have treated of African music always remind us of its Spanish antecedents,[80] which with the *muwashahs* and *zejels* have become popular all over North Africa.

So the following may be inferred: that many composers and musicians flourished in Moslem Spain, some of whom reached great fame through the originality of their inspiration. Thus a lyric school grew up which was genuinely Spanish by virtue of the invention of its own types of songs, and which spread over many Moslem countries during the Middle Ages. In North Africa, and in Asia as far as the boundaries of India, it has lasted until the present day. It is worthy of notice that wherever these songs of Spanish type went the music sung with them went also.

[79] It may be remembered that, in collections of songs referred to in chapter ii above, Granadan music is mentioned: *nubas* of Granada and songs of Andalusia.

[80] See for example the work on Algerian music by Al-Gauti, who says (page 92) that he himself has collected hundreds of *muwashahs* and *zejels*.

CHAPTER XII · ARAB MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN SPAIN :: AT THE COURT OF THE KINGS AND IN THE POPULAR FESTIVALS :: THE CHRISTIAN POPULATION ACCEPTS THE LYRIC MODELS OF THE MOORS OF ANDALUSIA :: ARAB SONGS GROW POPULAR IN THE CHRISTIAN PORTIONS OF THE PENINSULA

If the songs of the Spanish Moors crossed the sea and were learned and imitated by people far away in the Orient, is it possible that they should not have spread to the Christians of the Peninsula? When the Moorish cities were conquered, was every lute broken, every zither, flute, or rebec? Would every man, woman, and child have remained silent? Impossible to contemplate! The many Moriscos, who remained throughout the country, continued to sing and play their traditional music, the doleful obviously suited to their new situation as a subject race, and the gay, which might help to lighten their trials as well. During the early days of the re-conquest the Christians enjoyed the playing and singing of the Moors. The Latin Chronicle of the Emperor, Alfonso VII, refers to the entry of that monarch into Toledo in 1137, after the victory of Aurelia, when the Saracen grandees and Jews and Christians, and the people of Toledo went to a point far outside the town with drums, zithers, and psalteries, and all kinds of music, and each in his own language sang praises to God, begging Him to prosper the enterprises of their king.[1]

The Chronicle of Alfonso XI says, in the narration of the entrance of the King into Seville after the Battle of Salado:

> "And the Moors, both men and women,
> Made great diversion."[2]

That is to say, publicly and at times of great solemnity the Moors

[1] Rafael Mitjana, *La Musique en Espagne*, page 1928.

[2] Fernández y González, *Mudéjares*, page 239, note.

were called on for dances and songs. But the kings did not limit themselves to hearing Moorish music in the streets and plazas on festival days, but introduced it into their own palaces and kept Moorish musicians in their employ, as did the Moslem kings before them.

The accounts of the king, Don Sancho IV of Castille, son of Alfonso the Wise, mention the Moorish musicians attached to the royal chapel: one woman singer, wife of Zate; Yusuf; Muza; Abdu-l-lah Shatibi; Hamet; Muhammad, the player of the pipes; and Reshid of the Axabeba; besides a Moorish dancer and a trumpet player.[3] Alfonso of Aragon, in 1329, besought the King of Castille to send him two minstrels who could play on the *xabeba* and the *kanun*, Moorish instruments. King Pedro IV begged also, in 1337, that a Moorish minstrel from Játiva, named Halezigua, a fine rebec player, be sent to him. King Juan II, in 1389, arranged to have sent to him from Valencia an entire family of Moorish minstrels, whose chief, Mazot, brought with him his wife, mother, and other Moorish performers, who, after entertaining the king many days, took their leave, well paid.[4] The Portuguese Court also employed Moorish artists in the Royal Chapel in lavish fashion, for according to the wardrobe inventory of Don Manuel[5] five pages are necessary to

[3] *Ibid.*, page 294, note; Menéndez y Pelayo, *Antología*, II, page 36. My colleague in the University, Señor Ballesteros, gives me the pay-list of the king's company made by the Bishop of Tuy in the year 1294 (National Library, manuscript section, Signature 13090). Rafael Mitjana, in *La Musique*, page 1945, quotes the laws or palace orders, published 1337, by the king, Don Jaime III of Aragon, in which it says, "In domibus Principum, ut tradit antiquitas, mimi seu joculatores licite possunt esse." In 1439, at the wedding of the Prince of Viana with Anne of Cleves, "there were to be found Moorish men and women performers from Játiva" (*Diccionario de Antigüedades del reino de Navarra*, I, page 183). In August, 1443, the governors of Teruel sent payment to Mahoma Chacho of Fuertes for having played at the fair (Municipal Archives of Teruel, C. I. 10, folio 88). I owe these notes to my friend, Menéndez Pidal.

[4] Julián de Chía, *La música en Gerona* (Gerona, 1886), page 120. See also A. Rubio y Lluch, *Documents per l'historia de la cultura catalana* (Barcelona, 1908), Volume I, Document 100.

[5] Reprinted by A. Braamcamp Freire, *Archivo histórico*, II, page 393; see also Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcellos, *Estudos sobre o Romanceiro peninsular, Romances velhos en Portugal*, page 312. (*Cultura Española* edition.)

list just the objects pertaining to Moorish dancing. The affection in which Moorish music was held must have been widespread, for the artists were especially invited to take part in the public festivals. By royal order all the Moorish men and women of the Moslem quarter who could play and sing and dance were invited to give a merry kind of dance, called *folía*, at the reception for the prince, son of Don Juan II, and for the heiress of their Catholic Majesties. To show their joy publicly at the election of Maximilian, the inhabitants of Lisbon were invited to go through the Jewish and Moorish quarters dancing these same *folías*.[6]

The pleasure of the Christians in Moorish music was more than once considered by the church authorities as excessive and bordering on the scandalous. The council of Valladolid, in 1322, felt called upon to prohibit the Christians from approaching any of the places where the Moors celebrated their weddings or their funerals.[7] Above all they condemned the bringing of Moorish or Jewish musicians into the offices of the Christian Church as execrable.[8]

The weddings of the Moriscos were apt to be noisy, as in all Moorish countries. The theologian, Pedro Guerra, tells about the festivals which followed Morisco weddings. The bride was received with the music of flutes, zithers, and mandolins and conducted to her apartments, preceded by a great cortège of women.[9] For the procession through the streets and plazas, they would sometimes have trumpets and kettle-drums.[10] After reaching the house, they would begin to dance and sing.[11] The Moriscos also continued to celebrate their own *zambras* (festivals) and night revels. This word *zambra*, according to the book, *Rebelión de los moriscos*, by Marmol, comes from the Arabic and designates a band of musicians and also the festival at which they played and sang. This must have been a Spanish institution, for it was not in use in Africa. These *zambras*

[6] Michaelis, *Ajuda*, II, page 899.

[7] Fernández y González, *Mudéjares*, page 207.

[8] *Ibid.*, page 378.

[9] Pedro Longás, *Vida religiosa de los moriscos*, page 278.

[10] *Ibid.*, pages 282 and 283.

[11] *Ibid.*, page 411.

have been praised as the most artistic and famous dances of Spain.[12] *Leila* was the name given by the Moriscos to their festivals or dances that took place at night. The custom of celebrating musical festivals was so deep-rooted that it persisted until the expulsion of the Moors, in spite of all the royal prohibitions against the celebration of both *zambras* and *leilas* with Moorish instruments. Don Pedro de Cardona gives the following description: "They were fond of tales, jokes, and boasting, and devoted to dances, relaxations, country rambles, songs, dawn songs (for all of which they used bagpipes, timbrels, and tambourines), and especially any pastime of a noisy and rather rowdy nature, such as rustics indulge in."[13]

There were Christians who caught the contagion, for in the lawsuit of Francisco Descalz, an aged Christian of Cocentaina, one reads that he lived as a Moor, practicing their ceremonies, and singing Moorish canticles, and exhorting his neighbors to fast during the month of Ramadan. It is said that he went from place to place playing his flute, in the company of certain persons newly Christianized, who sang songs accompanied with the tambourine, in which Muhammad's name was mentioned. The Arabic words of one meant: "Friends, keep the fast in this month as usual so that ye may gain glory."[14] Even in the smallest and remotest towns in the mountains the Moriscos kept their fondness for playing the lute. Escolano describes the behavior of a pair of lovers of Bicorp (Mountains of Énguera): "The lover was found playing his lute before the door of his father's house to work off his rage against his parent, who was insisting on his marriage with someone other than his sweetheart."

But the Moriscos who most vitally maintained their tradition were those of the kingdom of Granada, the last stronghold of Islam-

[12] Francisco Lopez de Gómara, a Sevillian who wrote in the middle of the sixteenth century, says in his *Conquista de Nueva España* (*Bibliografía de autores españoles*, XXII, page 343), "the *zambra* of the Moors, which is the best dance we know hereabouts . . . ."

[13] Boronat, *Los moriscos*, page 196.

[14] Longás, *Vida religiosa de los moriscos*, page 224. The Moriscos of Aragon followed the custom of singing verses calculated to rouse the desire of the hearers to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and written in the same form as that advised by Al-Gazali in the Orient. See *Las coplas del Alhichante de Puey Monzón*, published by Don Mariano Pano, Saragossa.

ism in the Peninsula. The most vivid pictures of the music festivals celebrated in this kingdom are to be found in the works of Ginés Pérez de Hita. As an example I give the following, which shows the subtlety, orderliness, and elegance of their artistic contests:

"The plaza of Purchena was ready for the dances, with many carpets spread; all the important people were seated round about with Ibn Humeya on a dais; and lute and timbrel in place. Many Moorish youths, beautifully dressed, danced, one by one, marvelously well. Thereafter followed various cavaliers, dancing with lovely Moorish ladies.

"Then Ibn Humeya ordered that the Moorish maidens should come out alone to dance, and there were many who danced gracefully. Last came the lovely Luna, a native of Purchena. She appeared, richly dressed in a gown of artichoke green damask, trimmed with many golden borders, full pleated bloomers of fine chambray and blue velvet shoes embroidered in gold, so that her beauty was a sight to behold. She wore a marvelous head-dress and a veil so delicate that it did not hide the charms beneath, and carried a rich scarf or veil made of fine silk of many colors, embroidered in Tunis, and tipped with pure gold of great price. This beautiful maiden danced alone, so exquisitely that the onlookers remained speechless with wonder, as much for her beauty as for her lithe grace.

"Then Ibn Humeya commanded that the musicians should play and sing. Captain Derri played and sang beautifully, and Puertocarrero, a gallant lover, sang in Arabic the song that begins,

'Beautiful, fair Granada, ...'

"Gironcillo, born in Granada and remembering the flowery days of his youth passed there, took the lute and sang almost with tears in his eyes, as one who knew best whereof he sang. After tuning his instrument he began to play tenderly and to sing so that all hung spellbound on the sound of his music. He sang so charmingly in Castilian that everyone fell in love with his playing and singing.

"Next Ibn Humeya asked the most beautiful Moorish maidens to sing. These were unable to play on the lute; so a tambourine was brought for one, while another played the timbrels in the Moorish fashion. They sang a ballad and then a song called *tangía*. Then,

while many lovely and well-attired Moorish maidens were assembled, the beautiful Luna was importuned to sing in Arabic. She was followed by another Moorish maiden, whose father and brothers had been killed in the battle of Berja, and who, therefore, lived in grief. She had dwelt in a place called Deyre, but, after its sacking by the Christians, moved to Purchena with her relatives. Upon receiving permission to sing, she asked to have a tin plate brought to her in preference to the timbrel offered. She placed it on a little table and began whirling it around, steering it with her hand, so that it made a dull, sad sound, inclining all the listeners to sorrow. The beautiful, sad-hearted maiden, with tearful eyes turned to Ibn Humeya, began to sing dolorously, in a sweet and mournful voice, the following song in Arabic:

The blood shed by my father
Caused my mother to die.

. . . . . .

Alone I remain, all alone,
In a foreign land.
See if the billows of pain
Have swept over me!

And she finished:

Now I am weeping my tragic misfortune
And the sepulchre awaits me.

"With these words, the unfortunate lovely maiden gave a sigh which seemed to rend her, and there in sight of all, she died of the profound sorrow that she had felt in her song, so that all were left marveling."[15]

In this same town of Purchena the Moorish kinglet held competitions, offering valuable jewels to him who could most gracefully dance the *zambra* with a Moorish maiden; also to the Moor who could best sing and play in the Moorish manner, and to the maiden who could best sing an Arab song, and so forth.[16]

Thus it will be seen that even in the middle of the sixteenth

[15] Ginés Pérez de Hita, *Segunda parte de las guerras civiles de Granada.* Edited by P. Blanchard (Madrid, Bailly-Baillière, 1915), pages 181 ff.

[16] Ginés Pérez de Hita, *op. cit.*, pages 153 and 154.

century the Arabic musical tradition still held strongly among the Moriscos of Spain and that their songs and dances drew the admiration of the Christian chroniclers who tell us about them, and who appear especially to enjoy the sad songs of the Moriscos. Argote de Molina, in the middle of the sixteenth century, fixes his attention on the melancholy songs of the Moors about the loss of their native land, and even includes some in Granadan dialect, like the one that begins,

Alhambra hanina gualcoçor tabhqui.

This is attributed to Boabdil, last king of Granada.[17] Nevertheless it cannot be considered that this music, because of its melancholy, is exclusively Arabic, nor that the art of the Spanish Moslems is perpetuated only in the music of Granada. Musical compositions might still remain in the central and northern districts that would have belonged to the most classic or slightly decadent period. The Alhambra is an Arab monument, and also the Mosque of Cordova, the Giralda of Seville, the Aljafería of Saragossa, and the Cristo de la Luz of Toledo, although they are not in the Kingdom of Granada; and the music of the center of the Peninsula, growing out of the archaic Arab art, is to be recognized as such, although not identical with the sad Andalusian songs, in which the Moriscos lament the loss of Granada.

The Christians of the Peninsula heard the Moors playing and singing for five or six hundred years. Although they made it a rule not to learn Moorish songs, how could they distinguish, when half asleep at night, whether a serenade in the street outside were sung by Christians or by Moors? Moreover the Moors sang ravishing love-songs. Ginés Pérez de Hita[18] tells us that: "The valorous Zaide went one dark midnight with his lute to the street of his lady-love. Playing the sonorous lute, which he could do beautifully, he began to sing a sentimental song." The Christian priests accepted Moorish fabrics for their church vestments and bought vessels of Moorish ceramics for the service or reliquaries for the relics of their saints; so why not the music, if it was agreeable? We have already said that the Christians enjoyed assisting at the Moorish weddings and invited

[17] Ginés Pérez de Hita, *op. cit.*, Prologue, page xxxix.

[18] First part, page 46.

the Moorish artists to their entertainments; hence, it is unbelievable that they should not have learned their songs, even though unconsciously. For many centuries in every Moorish quarter of the Christian cities, the call to prayer was sounded from the minarets, either with pipes or with large trumpets.[19] At the Moorish festivals there were *zambras*, *leilas*, *pasacalles*, and serenades. They played on lutes, mandolins, lyres, flutes, dulcimers, flageolets, trumpets, and kettle-drums, making a great sound.[20] Sometimes they sang in Castilian which, in a corrupted form, was the language of many Moriscos.[21] Many times Moorish servants or slaves must have sung in the houses of Christians, and Moorish nurses must have soothed the Christian babies with their lullabies.[22] Moreover, men and women minstrels among the Moors went from place to place in the streets, plazas, and lanes, maintaining themselves on what they picked up from the public.

Something of this fondness for music must have passed to the Christians, for they promptly emulated the Moors. From early times Christian women became professional singers like the Moslem women. As early as the eleventh century Galician women went about the streets intoning sacred music.[23] The songs for women to

[19] Sometimes the Moors sang ballads from the top of some tower, and thus the Christians grew familiar with them. Ginés Pérez de Hita, *Segunda parte*, pages 20 and 21; see also my *Orígenes del Justicia de Aragón*, page 15.

[20] Ginés Pérez de Hita, *Segunda parte*, page 15.

[21] *Ibid.*, page 202, and other references which we shall mention later.

[22] *Orígenes del Justicia*, page 13.

[23] Carolina Michaelis, *Ajuda*, II, page 845. Allusions to women's songs are frequent in our literature. See the *Libro de Apolonio*.

> Early the other morning
> the dame got up, and richly dressed,
> took her good viola, well tuned,
> and went out into the market to
> play for hire.

Cervantes, in his comedy, *La gran Sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo* (facsimile edition of the Royal Academy, V, folio 130, rev.), affirms that "there is no Spanish woman but emerges a dancer from her mother's womb." To understand the feminine character in the popular Galician-Portuguese lyric, see Carolina Michaelis, *Ajuda*, II, pages 902 and 903.

sing to their lovers (a peculiarly Spanish phenomenon)[24] were popular all over the Peninsula, as was also the combination of dancing and singing to the accompaniment of instrumental music, even in the little villages. Religious and secular songs for chorus[25] were used especially at weddings, funerals (laments and dirges), New Year and spring festivals, vigils, pilgrimages, and the like, exactly as with the Moors.[26]

Popular affection for this music grew with such impetus as to draw bitter censure from serious-minded men. The *Confesión rimada* of Fernán Pérez de Guzmán may be recalled:

> To play on instruments and recite songs,
> And dance and sing in the Plazas,
> From this great nuisance and dissipation
> We have seen, and do see arise, temptation
> To go to the tavern to play at dice,
> Blaspheme God, and fight.
> O Lord! would it not be better
> To plough and dig in the fields![27]

The Chronicles and other documents do not tell us whether this music which the Christians used was Moorish or not, but fortunately there is an account by one of the great Spanish poets. The Archpriest of Hita states clearly one of the characteristics of the classic Moorish songs. One chapter in his book, *Libro de Buen Amor*, treats of the instruments *not* appropriate to Arab songs. He says:

> Some instruments are more appropriate
> Than others to certain types of songs.
> . . . . . .

[24] In the *Cancionero de Palacio*, there are many women's songs that we shall enumerate later.

[25] Carolina Michaelis, *Ajuda*, II, page 848.

[26] *Ibid.*, page 849; Rafael Mitjana, *La Musique*, page 1945.

[27] Amador de los Rios, *Historia crítica*, VII, page 431. A foreign traveler in the second half of the sixteenth century was surprised to see the girls of Alemtejo dance in Moorish dress, circling with grace and sprightliness (C. Michaelis, *Ajuda*, II, page 900). That is to say, the Christians disguised themselves as Moriscos to dance their dances. Does this not imply the acceptance of their music?

Arabic does not harmonize with the
vihuela de arco.
Pastoral flutes, *mandurria,* flageolets,
These do not give pleasure with Arabic music.[28]

The Archpriest understood that Arabic song did not blend well with instruments whose tone is sustained, that is, whose quality is in competition with the human voice; but that it required instruments which stress the rhythm and harmony and that are more staccato in type, such as those plucked with plectrum or fingers. This statement presupposes that the Archpriest had heard and perhaps even performed this music.[29] He himself tells us in the following verses that he was capable of composing songs for Moorish and Jewish girls:

Then I made many songs for dances and trots
For Jewish and Moorish girls.[30]

But alas! we have not a single tune from which to draw our own conclusions.[31]

Although we have no actual proof that the Christians learned Arab music, one strong indication of it is the introduction into Christian Spain of the lyric system of the Moslems, with words and music as closely united as body and shadow. The Archpriest of Hita was precisely one of those who composed verses in the form of the *zejel,* to be sung, not by professionals, but by students, women, and the common people. Assuredly he must have accommodated himself to the fashion of the Christian Spaniards and yet have followed the Moorish tradition.

[28] [The *vihuela,* one type of lute, may be played with either the plectrum or the bow.]

[29] I believe that the Archpriest indicated the type of music belonging to the Morisco professionals, perhaps those of Granada, rather than to the people. He could not have differentiated in the popular music of his time between that of ancient Arab background and that of Christian or European origin. If it is difficult nowadays for the intelligent seeker to determine the origin of some popular song, are we to believe that a profounder study would have been made at that time? He would have known as much as the experts of his time and no more.

[30] Juan Ruiz (Ducamín edition), page 281.

[31] Except one, mentioned by Salinas, to which we shall refer later.

It is noteworthy that popular Moorish metrics should have persisted in Christian Spain, for it indicates that Arab music was taken over without change. We found the early Oriental composers utilizing Byzantine or Persian music by harnessing it to Arab metrical forms that had already become traditional and to which the music had to accommodate itself. But the Christian Spaniards received both Arab music and poetry without the necessity of change. The historians of Spanish literature discuss at length as to whether the metrics of the Archpriest derived from Provençal, Galician, or Castilian sources;[32] but the type he often followed is the same as that of the popular Morisco poets[33] and even of those who wrote in the Romanic tongue. The Archpriest was perfectly familiar with this system through his relations with various Moorish women, whose conversations with him he correctly translates from Arabic into Spanish. It was the system invented by Mocadem of Cabra in the tenth century. Popular influences, which must have been very strong until the seventeenth century, kept it alive in Christian Spanish literature, and it still exists in our day in a weakened form, as we shall see later.

The scholars and editors of Spanish poetry have not satisfactorily interpreted the structure of some of the ancient compositions, because they did not lay enough stress on this peculiar old form, so deep-rooted in tradition; but they would find in the Moorish lyric form explanations for many obscure phenomena in the Christian metrics. Although modern literary customs have dislodged the ancient traditions, even today the popular rhymes and prayers of children

[32] Menéndez y Pelayo, in his *Antología*, summarizes the opinions about the lyrics of the Archpriest, as being derived from French or Provençal troubadours, or Arab poets and story writers. He believes it to be a complex organism (III, page lxxi) and that the bucolic verses come, not directly from Provence, but from the Provençal lyrics imitated and modified by Galician troubadours (III, page vii). The hymns of praise to the Virgin Mary are explained by those of Alfonso the Wise, and the bucolic ones by the *Cancionero del Vaticano* (III, page c).

[33] The Moriscos naturally enough continued the strophic forms of Moslem Spain. See the *Discurso* of Don Eduardo Saavedra in *Memorias de la Real Academia Española*, VI, page 181. See also Calderón, who in his drama, *Amar después de la muerte*, makes a Morisco sing in *zejel* form, *a a a b*, *c c c b*, with refrain and all.

retain some survivals.[34] Considering its great vitality, it is not surprising that the Spanish song-books (*cancioneros*) should be full of examples. There is no need to seek outside of the Peninsula, since the type originated, developed, and popularized itself there before it was copied elsewhere. A few deviations are perhaps all that need be sought in other literature.

Even the most courtly of the poets came under the influence of the popular lyric. In the ancient Portuguese song-books, some *zejels* of the pure, traditional Spanish form are inserted, composed by court writers.[35] Above all in the Castilian *cancioneros* the tradition remains constant until the seventeenth century, varied in form, but maintaining the purity of the pattern. Many of them show traces of those which were sung among the people.[36]

[34] See the *Colección de cantos populares* of Ignacio de Alcazar, I, Nos. 60, 76, 129, 164.

[35] See the *Cancionero Portugués del Vaticano* (Nos. 190, 1017, 1048, 1080; also pages 950 and 952), the *Trovas do Conde Barcellos* (pages 306 and 307); in various Catalan song-books, especially *El Cancionero de la Universidad de Zaragoza* (page 164) by Mariano Baselga, and in the work of Milá y Fontanals, second edition, Barcelona, 1859.

[36] In the *Cancionero de Baena* are to be found various *zejels* of Alfonso Alvarez de Villasandino (Nos. 7, 8, 51, 141, 196, 203, and 219). These are of the primitive type which he qualifies as *desfecha por arte estribote* (page 12), and others in subdivided form, sometimes capriciously broken up (Nos. 9, 31, 44, 213). There are others, of Fray Diego de Valencia (No. 500), of Juan II of Castile (Appendix, page lxxx), and of Pero González of Mendoza (No. 251). In the *Teatro Completo de Juan del Encina*, Real Academia Española edition, Madrid, 1893 (pages 46 and 57), are *villancicos* of pure type.

See the following also:

Cancionero de Juan Alvarez Gato, pages 170, 171, 172, and 176; *Cancionero de Don Pedro Ximénez de Urrea*, pages 365, 367, 373, 390, 435, 446; *Cancionero Inédito del siglo XV*, pages 96, 209, 210, 227; *Cancionero de Stuñiga*, pages 355, 383; *Cancionero de Fray Ambrosio de Montesinos*, pages 423, 429, 438, 459; *Romancero y Cancionero sagrados*, Nos. 554, 808, 855; *Cancionero Gallego Castellano* by Lang; *Spanische Cancionero* by Rennert, Nos. 116, 117, 214, 352; *Cancionero General de Hernando*, II, page 558.

Even in the *Academia burlesca de 1637* published by Morel-Fatio, there is a very vulgar and burlesque *zejel* of Juan Navarro de Espinosa. All these without even mentioning some complete treatises, as the *Tractado de Doctrina* (inserted in the volume of the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*) dedicated to the Castilian poets

To summarize then, the Andalusian system, invented by Mocadem, stayed alive among Spanish poets as late as the middle of the seventeenth century. So if the music accompanied the poetry, the indications are that Arab music was popular in Spain throughout many centuries. Moreover the Christians took over the instruments, first the lute, the noblest and most important of all. Historians affirm that the lute passed from the Persians to the Moslems, who introduced it into the Peninsula, whence it passed to the other European countries, there remaining the dominating stringed instrument until after the Renaissance. But the historians stop here without seeing that this fact is an indication that Arabic music was introduced into Europe.[37] That the lute should have entered Europe without its own music is most unlikely. Whoever buys a piano nowadays, or a harmonium, does so with the wish to execute music for that instrument and not for the flute or any other. This is so natural that it must have been true formerly of the lute.

Real testimony to this fact comes through a little work, preserved at the Convent of the Capuchins at Gerona, and copied by Villanueva in his *Viaje Literario*.[38] The author, a Christian, begins by wondering that the Holy Spirit should have so endowed the infidels with talent that a Moor of Granada, worthy of praise among Spanish lute-players, could have invented a method by means of which those who desired might learn to play the lute, the zither, and the *vihuela*, and other similar instruments. Lastly, the author declared that his knowledge of these matters was due to a preaching friar of Barcelona. Evidently then, Christians who wished to learn to play sought Moorish teachers; and would not this have meant the transference of songs? One clause in his essay indicates that it was

of the fifteenth century and written in quatrains, *a a a b*. There were countless later forms, altered or degenerated by succeeding fashions, but with vestiges of the original type. Also there were vast numbers of works written in true octettes, *a b a b a b c c*, evidently derived from the subdivision of the primitive quatrain, like the *Araucana*, *Austriada*, *Monserrate*, *Jerusalén conquistada*, etc. In these, however, there is no trace of the choral basis from which they sprang.

[37] See Gevaert, in his introduction to G. Morphy's *Les Luthistes espagnols du XVI^e siècle*, I, page xi.

[38] XIV, page 176.

not plain song thus transferred; *et ponat tale modo cantilenam in instrumento, quod semythonia cantilene respondeat semythonis instrumenti.*

The Moslems constructed different types of lutes, soprano, baritone, and so forth, and with varying numbers of strings; also many other instruments of the same family, which were played with either the fingers or a plectrum, and all were used later in Christian Spain with their Arabic names. One of the most important instruments in all medieval Europe was the *rabel;* the name was derived from the Arabic *rabeb.* There has been much discussion about its origin, for as plucked instruments preponderated in Islam it has been thought that the *rabel* with its legato bowing grew up in some other civilization, perhaps a European.[39] But Oriental Arabic testimony goes back to the ninth century (farther than the European) and affirms that this instrument was well known earlier than that date and even as far as the regions of Central Asia; so we are disposed to believe that its appearance in Europe came through Arab influence.[40] Among the wind instruments which the Spanish Moors used frequently, and which later became traditional among the Christians of the Peninsula, we find the pastoral flute, the Moorish pipes, two kinds of flageolet, and the bagpipes. Some have preserved their Arabic names without alteration, such as *albogue* and *añafil;* the alterations of the other names disguise them: "*surnay*" to *dulzaina* and "*zolami*" to *chirimia.* The instruments of percussion, the tambrel, tambourine, castanets, brass rattles, *nacara,* and *atambor,* were Moorish also.[41]

The Archpriest of Hita, the best-informed poet of the Middle Ages in these matters, devotes a goodly space to a description of contemporary instruments. He mentions by name *atambores,* the Moorish and the Latin guitar, the lute, the *rabe* and Moorish *rabe,*

[39] Even Land himself, in his *Recherches* (page 55, note), is inclined to think that the West introduced it to the East.

[40] The celebrated philosopher, Al-Jahidh (ninth century), in his *Majmuato-r-rasail,* speaks of the *rabel* of Assardan as being already legendary, as were the singers of the first generation of Arabic art, Hababa, Jamila, and so forth. The *Mafatih* indicates that the *rabel* came from Khorasan.

[41] For most of the instruments see Eguilaz, *Glossario etimológico,* under corresponding articles.

rrota, salterio, vihuela and *vihuela de arco, panderete,* harp, flute, *tamborete, medio caño* and *caño entero, sonajas de azofar, organos, hadedura aluardana, dulcema, axabeba, albogon, mandurria, trompas, añafiles,* and *atabales.*[42]

To show the influence of Arab art on the construction of instruments used by Christians we reproduce the figures of some angels from a triptych dated 1390, and preserved in the Museum of the Royal Academy of History. Each angel is playing some instrument, one a portable organ, another a seven-stringed lute, two play on *rabels,* one of four and one of three double strings; while others play, respectively, a triangular psaltery with nineteen groups of three strings each, a large mandolin of eighteen strings, and a lute for plectrum with three groups of three strings.

Moreover, the Spanish vocabulary is full of Arab words with which the Christians must have familiarized themselves, in order to have intimate contacts with the Moors in their musical festivals. Some are intended to express loud demonstrations, like *algazara, alarido, alborote, alborbola, algarabia, rifirafe, zalagarda* or *zaragata, zambra, leila,* and so forth. Others are used for types of songs or dances, like *anexir, fandango, sorongo, zarabanda.* In some cases the significance is now lost.

All these indications and allusions, taken together, corroborate one another so convincingly that the most discreet scholars have concurred as to Moslem influence on Spanish music. Menéndez y Pelayo[43] states that since the fourteenth century Arab music has exerted a profound influence on Spanish Christians. "The texts of the Archpriest of Hita alone would prove it. It is natural that, with the instruments and the sound, the words should have come also, especially as some of the minstrels were Moorish women."[44]

[42] Ducamín edition, pages 220, 221, 222. Julián de Chía, in *La música en Gerona,* gives an interesting list of instruments used at various epochs in that city: *naffils, lahut, tabal, rebeu* or *rabeu, pandero, shelamies, dolsayne, guitarras,* etc. See also the *Libro de Alexandre.*

[43] *Antología,* II, page 68.

[44] Moreover, the great Spanish Christian musicians of the sixteenth century shocked European artistic circles by the character of their music, and were blamed for following a tradition that divided them from the tendencies of erudite European music. The compositions of the illustrious Victoria were reported by the

Figure of angel playing the psaltery, from a triptych dated 1390, from the Monasterio de Piedra, now in the Museum of the Royal Academy of History

Rafael Mitjana recognizes definitely that Oriental music must have left traces on Spanish art, although he was a disciple of Pedrell, who himself denied all such influence. Mitjana bases his opinion on the fact that much of the popular Spanish music which has been preserved is characterized by overmuch ornamentation and by the rhythmic disagreement between the melody and the accompanying instrument, as well as by the licentiousness of the dances and the sadness and effeminacy of the songs, rich with voluptuous chromatics. That is to say, those characteristics, which have been perceived by modern European investigators as being present in modern North African and Oriental music are supposed to represent medieval Oriental music; but we have shown that these did not belong to the early classic art. However, this kind of argument is indefinite and therefore valueless. But there is one medieval melody that was surely used by the Moors and Christians and was popular all over the Peninsula.[45] The distinguished writer Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcellos has published an erudite pamphlet enumerating the proofs of its diffusion and its performance on the stage and in popular festivals at the time of Gil Vicente, as well as in the centuries before and after. Finally it was used by the Christians as a cradle song. To find the true reading of the Arabic words in this song, Mme Michaelis brings many texts to bear, above all that most curious one in Salinas' *De musica libri septem.* This Spanish musician, in speaking of the five-part rhythm, gives a common example, which he says is a song and dance used among the Spaniards and often among the Moors.

Calvi vi calvi calvi orabi.

Flemish and Italians to have sprung from Moorish blood. (See, in *Homenaje a Menéndez y Pelayo,* Pedrell's article about Victoria.) Another proof lies in the imitation of Moorish festivals by the Christians in the fourteenth century. Enrique IV, who, according to some contemporaneous writers, copied the Moorish fashion in every way, also "sang all types of music well, songs and ballads; and it was a great pleasure to hear him" (Menéndez Pidal, *Epopeya,* page 184). He was devoted to Moorish music. During his expedition against Granada he went daily to a farmhouse to hear the music of the Moors. See Paz y Melia, *El cronista Alonzo de Palencia,* page 383.

[45] See article entitled "*Notas sobre a canção perdida, 'Este es calbi orabi'* " in *Revista Lusitana,* XVIII, Porto, 1915.

With these words belongs a melody used also by the Christians with the following words:

Rey don Alfonso, Rey mi señor.

This attained such popularity that it became proverbial, as shown by Mme Michaelis. Unfortunately the tune of Salinas is only a fragment, cited merely to explain a rhythm, which we shall see later is one of the principal forms used by the Arabs and most popular throughout the Peninsula until the present day.[46]

This tune, vouched for by Salinas, a contemporaneous Christian and professor of music at Salamanca, shows a danceable Moorish melody of a rhythm exceedingly common with that people. With Christian words, it reached such great and century-long popularity that it became proverbial. This, although an isolated fact, is very significant, for it confirms many previous indications. It shows a path which should lead to the mine where the vein of Arab music is to be found—the popular music of the Christian Spaniards of the Middle Ages. Happily, medieval song-books have been preserved in which the lyric traditions of the Moors are patent at first sight, for the words, with refrains and stanzas, are written alongside of the music. This latter is in modern notation and, therefore, clearer than that of the thirteenth century. The manuscripts were made in the sixteenth century, a period when the Moorish influence prevailed in the Penin-

[46] Answering Mme Michaelis' invitation to the Arabists to explain the sentence, *calvi vi calvi calvi orabi*, I shall try my hand. *Calvi* is the Arabic for *my heart.* This is found in the poetry of all times. But the sentence *calvi vi calvi* is more unusual. I find it in one Arabic Spanish poet, in some verses which he dedicated to a woman tavern-singer of Malaga. They are to be found in Al-Makkari (Bulak edition), IV, pages 44 and 45. A play on words is evident, for in one place he says "yan*calib bi calbi calb*"; then in another passage he gives the same order of sentence as Salinas, which might be translated, "I think, heart of mine, that in my heart I love thee." The *calvi orabi*, I judge, is an allusion to a song of Oraib's (the Oriental singer whose many partisans were called Orabies). Oraib set to music words beginning "*Ma da* BICALBI" (see above, p. 95 n.). Isfahani also quotes the song in two places (XVIII, pages 87 and 189). So from all this, I venture to infer that the entire sentence, as given, refers to the song of that time, like the one of Oraib's, beginning with the word *calvi.* To prove this we should have to show a song of hers which belonged to the classic Oriental school, but which became really prominent in Spain.

sula, and in much better preservation than in the Orient, where it had already suffered seven centuries of decadence.

In Spain, as we have said, the causes of disintegration were not present, for the pedantry and virtuosity of the court found small foothold, because the popular element is habitually more conservative than the professional. Thus if it is true that Arab music reached the very heart of the popular spirit of Spain, it is pretty certain to have conserved there its primitive characteristics.

Let us try to find these.

CHAPTER XIII · THE *CANCIONERO DE PALACIO* :: THE *ZEJEL* OF THE *THREE LITTLE MOORISH MAIDENS* :: SONGS OF THE SPANISH CHRISTIANS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

FORTUNATELY for the history of Spanish music, an invaluable collection of popular Spanish songs of the Middle Ages has been preserved in the Library of the Royal Palace. It was republished by Barbieri, and in it are songs that were sung in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[1] Although some are arranged polyphonically, in the fashion of that day, for palace singers, the words keep no small part of their popular phrasing and archaic turns, also their choral form and simple melodic line with its common repetitions. Carolina Michaelis carefully scrutinized these in trying to find the ancient forms of compositions of the Peninsula. She noted that the music also showed great age, and knew that "in old romances of archaic language, old music also was used";[2] but she did not essay to judge the music. Barbieri sees nothing strange in it, but considers it as normal and Spanish; while the foreign scholars who have analyzed it and pondered over its historical significance have stopped, perplexed, before an enigma they could not decipher. Riemann says: "It is a source to be particularly studied, for it is a collection of secular songs not carefully examined up to the present time. It is little short of incomprehensible (*unbegreiflich*)."[3]

From the study of this collection and that of the Spanish lute-players three things stand forth: first, that Spanish art evolved inde-

[1] *Cancionero musical de los siglos XV y XVI*, transcribed and annotated by Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, Madrid, 1890.

[2] *Romances velhos*, page 312.

[3] *Handbuch*, II, Part I, page 57. In speaking of this *Cancionero* in his *Dictionary*, Riemann says that its publication passed almost unnoticed, in spite of its importance and the new light it threw on the music of its time. Some of the compositions in it must go back to the times of the troubadours. See his *Dictionary*, under "Ballads."

pendently[4] of European art; second, that in the matter of composition Spain was on a level with the most cultured nations of Europe; and, third, that in instrumental music she probably was in advance of them all.[5] In my judgment, Riemann's opinion is due to the fact that we have here very remarkable music, as the result of its separate development outside of the traditions of the European schools. For many centuries previous to the period of those compositions, the development of music in Christian Spain was little known to the outside world, and therefore unrecognized, although these early musicians and their compositions were really ahead of the musical development in other European nations.[6] But we have seen that southern Spain had its school of inspired musicians who, following an indigenous Spanish pattern, liked to compose music in the popular vein, some of which reached the greatest popularity. If the words and above all the tunes in this *Cancionero* show the characteristics described by the Arabian authors, and also evidence that they had emanated from Arabian schools, would not Riemann's enigma be solved?

Even without other proofs or documents, this *Cancionero* alone would suffice, for we find that lyric compositions in *zejel* form are most popular in this collection, also many strophic poems in archaic language, altered and disfigured by popular use.[7] There are various

[4] Riemann is surprised not to find a single canon in the 460 numbers of the *Cancionero* (*Handbuch*, II, Part I, page 89).

[5] *Ibid.*, II, Part I, page 225.

[6] It is said of Spain that she had painters, architects, sculptors, but no musicians. This leads to the following kind of judgment. Carl van Vechten says that the best composer in Spain is the people (*The Music of Spain*, New York, Knopf, 1918, page 150). It has also been quoted by others. Luis Nueda, in his book, *De Música* (page 225), says: "This sunny country, with its blue skies, has produced the best painters in the world, but by contrast has not given life to any extraordinary musician."

[7] Some have only one stanza remaining, some have consonance instead of assonance; in others, like No. 449, the cesuras have been considered as lines. They are in the same form as those of Ibn Kuzman. All classes of Spaniards must have sung them. The following Numbers may be examined: 12, 13, 17, 18, 35, 41, 55, 58, 60, 61, 67, 74, 85, 86, 91, 111, 113, 114, 118, 121, 127, 131, 138, 159, 170, 171, 175, 176, 178, 180, 189, 191, 192, 200, 205, 211, 215, 223, 227, 234, 259, 264, 278, 295, 298, 301, 341, 346, 369, 370, 371, 406, 407, 409,

compositions meant to be sung by Christians, which illustrate the close artistic relationship between them and the Moors. [For the sake of the form we give the following verses in Spanish as well as in translation:]

Quien vos había de llevar
Oxalá
Ay Fátima, Fátima,[8]

Who would you take with you,
Would to God!
Ah! Fatima, Fatima.

Aquella mora garrida
sus amores dan pena a mi vida.[9]

That pretty Moorish maiden
strikes pain into my heart with her love.

These strengthen the idea that there are Moorish songs in the *Cancionero*, so would not some of them have definite evidences of being pure Arab? There is one very singular example, the analysis of whose words shows us a long and migratory history, worthy of detailed explanation. Two versions are given, Nos. 17 and 18.

17. Tres morillas me enamoran
en Jaén,
Axa y Fátima y Marién.

Tres morillas tan garridas
iban a coger olivas
y hallábanlas cogidas
en Jaén,
Axa, Fátima y Marién.

416, 419, 422, 426, 433, 435, 440, 447, 449, 452, and 460. Here are sixty-five *zejels*, a larger group of this kind than appear in any other Spanish song-book.

[8] *Cancionero*, No. 85.

[9] No. 164.

Y hallábanlas cogidas
Y tornaban desmaídas
y las colores perdidas
en Jaén,
Axa, Fátima y Marién.

I'm in love with three Moorish maidens
In Jaén,
Asha and Fatima and Marien.

These three lovely little maidens
Started forth to gather olives
And they sought until they found them
In Jaén,
Asha and Fatima and Marien.

Then they sought until they found them
But returned in grave dismay
And with pallid cheeks
To Jaén,
Asha, Fatima, and Marien.

18. Díjeles, ¿quién sois, señoras,
de mi vida robadoras?
—Cristianas qu'eramos moras
de Jaén,
Axa, y Fátima y Marién.

Con su gran hermosura,
crianza, seso y cordura
cautivaron mi ventura
y mi bien,
Axa y Fátima y Marién, etc.

Who are you? I asked, Señoras,
Robbers are you of my life.
Christians are we who were Moors
Of Jaén,
Asha, Fatima, and Marien.

Breeding, talents, and prudence
They have captivated my hopes
And my being—
Asha and Fatima and Marien, etc.

This is a Moorish song, both because of its metrical form (*zejel*) and its subject. The scene is laid in Bagdad, the very capital of the Abbasid Empire, where an episode occurred between the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid and three girls of the palace, a facetious, clever incident, but in such bad taste that we shall not recount it. About it the sovereign is said to have composed the following Arab verses on this theme, which we translate:

Three affable maidens have dominion over me;
They have their abode in my heart, but thence go where their caprice suggests.
Why do all creatures obey and respect me as their sovereign,
But, although I am overcome by their love, the maids rebel?
The sovereignty of love which dwells in them
Excels my power as sovereign.[10]

It is known that these verses were later sung by Oraib and that the music was an *allegro* in the *first-takil* rhythm. Word of their creation passed from mouth to mouth in all quarters of the capital. To these verses popular poets added others, which people loved to sing:

Three maidens have implanted themselves in the very center of my being.
My love prefers them to all that can be desired on this earth.
The hearts of the three have woven themselves into the thread of my heart.
There they will stay, in the intimacy of my soul, till the Day of Judgment,
Chiefs and inspectors of all that finds lodging in my bosom.

[10] *Agani*, XV, page 78. Other versions are attributed to the poet, Al-Abbas bin Al-Ahnaf.

The popularity of this song resulted in its application to other persons and situations. A different version appears in the *Arabian Nights*, referring to Al-Mutawakkil,[11] and sung by one of his singers. The words are almost the same, with only one or two insignificant changes. Instead of being described as gracious or affable, the maidens are singers.

This song reached Spain. Muhiyu'd Din bin Al-Arabi cites it[12] at various times, with its two different versions, in explanation of certain psychological phases of mystic love. The song must have circulated among Spanish scholars, for several poets imitated its type. The Omayyad monarch, Al-Mustain of Cordova, composed some verses in which he wished to emulate Harun-al-Rashid, showing himself also ready to submit to the love of the three maidens. His verses are as follows:

What could be more remarkable! Valiant champions
fear the impetus of my lance,
And I am timorous before the regard of languishing
eyes.
The dangers of war are not really so fearful,
One can meet them or fly from them.
But how fly when three lovely maidens,
Young and beautiful as marble statues,
Have taken possession of my soul?
They are beautiful in face and pliant and tender of
body,
They are like stars that shine in the darkness of the
night
Above the branches of the trees that are silhouetted on
the top of the hill.
One is like the full moon, another like the morning star,
The third like a graceful branch of an Egyptian willow.
I have besought forgetfulness to come into the presence
of the love I profess for these maidens.
I may not forget them, for love is a sovereign above
all monarchs of the earth.

[11] Bulak edition, IV, page 224, Ottoman Press, year 1307 of the Hegira.

[12] *Al-Futuhat*, II, pages 149 and 435.

If they abandon me and sentence my heart to punishment,
Although I am monarch of my kingdom, I should be a captive or prisoner of war.
A king need not be reproached for submitting to the passion of love.
To yield to the exigencies of love is a noble deed, equal in my mind to a second kingdom.
There is nothing to hinder my being their servant with love returned.
Even though other men and they themselves are my own slaves,
If I did not subject myself with exalted passion in following the impulse of my affection,
I should be unworthy of the noble race of Meruan.[13]

Apart from these erudite versions composed by the Spanish classicists,[14] there must have been a popular song in *zejel* form, which was the type from which the Castilian one in our *Cancionero* was derived. An allusion is to be found in the *Cancionero* of Ibn

[13] Al-Makkari, I, page 281.

[14] A Granadan writer, Abu'l-Fadal bin Reduan, wrote a letter to his friend, the poet Ibrahim bin Al-Haj Annomairi, imitating the song of Al-Mamun (here applied to a different monarch). His friend answered with further verses alluding to the theme (Al-Makkari, Bulak edition, IV, page 256). Other imitations are to be found in some verses of the Granadan, Ahmed bin Loyon (*ibid.*, III). Some versions must have been known in the rest of Europe in a mystic or symbolic sense, for Dante Alighieri wrote a song beginning as did the popular version from Bagdad, and with an argument similar to that of Harun-al-Rashid.

Tre donne intorno al cor me son venute,
E seggionsi di fore; chè dentro siede Amore,
Lo quale è in signoria della mia vita.
Tanto son belle, e di tanta virtute,
Che'l possente signore,
Dico quel ch'è nel core
Appena di parlar di lor s'aita.

Either directly or indirectly Dante knew the doctrines of some of the Moslem mystics well. This verse is No. XIX of *Il Canzoniere di Dante Alighieri*, G. Barbera, Firenze, page 205.

Kuzman[15] to the three Moorish maidens, whose names were Asha, Zohra, and Mariem. I believe these must have been symbolic. Asha was the name of Muhammad's wife, symbolizing the Muhammadan woman; Zohra signifies Venus, the pagan woman; and Mariem, or Maria, the Christian woman. In the *zejel* of the *Cancionero de Palacio*, instead of the somewhat erudite name of Zohra, we find the name Fatima, which was most popular among Moors and Christians alike; thus Asha and Fatima and Marien.

Let us now follow the evolution of this lyric. In the Harun-al-Rashid version, the three girls are his slaves, but he does not name or describe them. He only expresses his love and recognizes the sovereignty of love to which monarchs bow. Al-Mustain of Cordova, beside expressing this obedience even of kings, describes the maidens as lovely, but without naming them. Ibn Kuzman gives three names; two appear in the Castilian version of the *Cancionero de Palacio* in the refrain sung by the chorus. This version is perhaps derived from the one popular among Spanish Moors, which gives the names. The final form of this ancient song, in its wanderings over the Iberian Peninsula, was found by Carolina Michaelis,[16] who discovered the following somewhat decrepit version still extant in the little town of Parada in the province of Trasos-Montes, Portugal:

As meninas todas tres Marías
Foran a colher andrinas
Quando là chegaram
Acharam-nas colhidas.

This time the three maidens are all Christians and all named Maria. Here then is a song which has lived more than a thousand years; born in Bagdad, spread over the Moslem world even to Spain, continuing there many centuries and suffering its last gasp in the villages of Portugal. As will be seen, the fifteenth-century version still carries Moorish earmarks with its refrain and stanzas, in which we find the three-part element and the common rhyme. That is to say, it is the *zejel* of the Moors.

[15] *Zejel* XII, third stanza.

[16] See her *Cancionero de Ajuda*, II, page 935.

Its music is most interesting, as in it we discover the secret of the poetic form. For, as in the words of the refrain the idea of the whole song is condensed (according to the Andalusian pattern), so also in the musical refrain (executed by the chorus). The melodic theme is as follows:

Mi la sol mi do re mi
Re do si la, la si do re mi (re mi)[17]

The stanza begins with the first of these phrases, repeating it three times:

Mi la sol mi do re mi (fa mi)
Mi la sol mi do re mi (fa mi)
Mi la sol mi do re mi

and finishes with the second phrase:

Re do si la, la si do re mi (re mi)

This musical quatrain may be diagramed as *a a a b*, coinciding with the verses. So the two patterns fit, words and music. The rhythm is what Oraib might have used, and she was an artist of the classic school. But it is not to be understood that the melody, as originally used in the Orient, would have had the same placing of phrases as in our *Cancionero*. The former would have been monodic, and the latter is in the choral Spanish form, with the final cadence on the same note as that which begins the song. By this means the soloist and the chorus indicate to each other the connecting note. The compass of the melody is just an octave, which is the case in the classic compositions of Al-Mosuli. The key is clearly A minor, which musicologists agree was most characteristic of Oriental music. All the cadences are on the dominant of the minor, even the final cadence; but this cadence on the dominant, though contrary to the canons of later European compositions, is precisely the characteristic of modern popular Andalusian music, recognized by musicologists as derived from Arab art.

Polyphonic ornaments have been added to the tune in the *Cancionero de Palacio*, according to the fashion of the medieval

[17] It is characteristic of these songs to make a turn about each cadential note.

musicians, who liked to utilize a popular or religious theme for their polyphonic adventurings. Taking no account of these, however, we find that the tune lends itself to an accompaniment made up of a regular succession of chords which did not grow out of the traditions of the European schools of that time, but took for granted modulating patterns that developed at a later date farther north. Although not at that time accepted in the canons of European music, the above-mentioned type of final cadence maintained itself in Spain in most of the closes of *soleares, playeras, polos, paños morunos, fandangos, malagueñas, rondeñas,* and *granadinas* of Andalusia, as well as in the *molinera* of Castile and other similar songs of Asturias, Galicia, and Catalonia. All the European musicians of our day who have wished to imitate African or Oriental songs have gone back to this same form. That is to say, they have considered it a distinctive element of this music.

To affirm then that this melody is Arabic, we have only to review the following technical considerations:

1. The subject of the verses with their well-documented evidences of Moorish tradition
2. The choral plan, with refrain and stanza and rhyme after the model of the *zejel*
3. The melodic structure which follows the same pattern
4. The internal characteristics of the tune, rhythm, tonality, and harmonic form

It is, moreover, a musical miniature, expressive, charming, and complete, the production of a consummate artist, who knew how to create a simple, easily executed melody, with which well-modulated chords might be used. These qualities all coincide with our data in regard to the Moslem school of Spain, so this song becomes a record, attesting the genius of the artist who created it. The melody of the *"Tres morillas"* still passes on its emotion to the musical world, for Mendelssohn harmonized it in the Andante of his *Fourth Symphony* without essential alteration from the earlier form. Meyerbeer used it in the most prominent places in his opera *L'Africaine.*[18]

This song did not work its way surreptitiously into the music of Christian Spain. The fact of its preservation shows that it must have

[18] See the prelude and the beginnings of Acts I and III.

been exceedingly popular, and the number of versions in the *Cancionero* is added evidence. The most popular of these is No. 17, of which the words are a parody. The melody has hardly been altered through the exigencies of the polyphony. Another more erudite version is No. 18, altered in its second melodic phrase and in other details on account of the polyphony. The words are interesting though somewhat pedantic, with traces adding further confirmation of the history of the song. Still another version, No. 245, with indecent words evidently coming from a lower social stratum, shows the common strophic pattern. The melody has lost one of its phrases through mishandling by careless singers, leaving it thus with practically only one melodic member.[19] No. 53 again, altered through contact with other songs, must have had equivalent phrases with different cadences, perhaps supplied by some popular, though skilled, artist. No. 162, with a very elegant rhythm that differs from No. 17, must be the work of a talented composer, for it is adorned with notes imitating the plucking of the lute and an agreeable modulation into D minor in the stanzas. Finally, No. 193 has broadly extended ornaments and suggests a singer who wishes to show off his technical skill.

All this indicates that the theme of "*Las tres morillas*" lived among all the various social strata of Christian Spain, from the vulgar singer to the virtuoso of palace life, and, moreover, was worked over by Christian musicians whose names appear in the *Cancionero*.[20]

When a theme is as widely diffused as this, one can hardly doubt its age and traditional quality. Hence if this Arabic melody could reach such a point before the fifteenth century in Castile, we ought not to be surprised to find in this collection others from the same source, although not so definitely documented; and there are other

[19] This impoverished form of a single melodic member frequently occurs in this *Cancionero*, and indicates common usage.

[20] Encina has used it soberly in No. 79; No. 262 is a melismatic version; in No. 240 it is slightly amplified; and No. 381 has variants and modulations. Millan used it in No. 379, and Baena in No. 352 and No. 395 with variations. It also appears as the theme of the chorus in the song, No. 229, by Gabriel, in No. 442 by Lagarto, No. 336 (anonymous), No. 367 by Jacobus, and in No. 390 by A. de Torre. These are all different types.

closely related melodies in the *Cancionero*, though the words show no such indication.[21]

These three melodies follow the same organic tendencies and harmonic pattern. An analysis shows a relationship between them, the same opening and closing notes, compass, curves of melody, key, and harmonic structure, with cadences on the dominant. All three have a passing modulation to the relative major, though in No. 159 it is not very strongly marked. This number has a more gradual flow, without skips, and for this reason seems more simple and popular. Instead of expressing, as does No. 17, peaceful emotions of satisfied love, its words are full of melancholy and loneliness and bitterness. Its theme is the origin of many medieval Spanish songs in the *Cancionero de Palacio* and also of many sad modern Andalusian songs, especially the *soleares*.[22]

[21] A comparison may be made between our "*Morillas*" and Nos. 159 and 4:

No. 159. Plan of the words, as *a a b b b a*, like the Arab *zejel*. The same for the music, *a b a'a' a b*. Melodic *zejel*. The two apostrophes indicate slight variations, not sufficient to cloak the real identity of the song. This may have been a subsequent addition to the original composition.

No. 4. Plan of the words, *x a a b c b c c a a*. This is a hybridization of Italian *quintillas* with Spanish refrains.

For the music, *a b c a c a c a b c*. This is in ancient but not classic structure; later, when we treat the subject further with reference to the *Cantigas* of this pattern, we shall see that it was post-classic.

Let us compare the three tunes:

"*Las tres morillas*": mi la sol mi do re mi | re do si la | la si do re mi.

No. 159: mi fa sol la si do si la sol fa mi | mi fa sol la | re do re mi.

No. 4: mi fa sol la la sol la la, la si do re do si sol mi | do re mi fa | mi mi re mi.

[22] Juan de Valera affirms that the song, No. 264, is a more florid variant of No. 159, altered in certain notes, but preserving the *zejel* structure. No. 207 (anonymous) is sad, a woman's song with popular words, giving us still another variant, as do also Nos. 195, 189, 365, 416, and 153, though in this last the theme is somewhat concealed. The melody of No. 4 is not a solitary case either; there are different versions with popular words which indicate its wide diffusion. Nos. 5, 206 (in D minor), and 157 are cases in point. No. 44 is a less severe variant. From these is derived a very artistic one, No. 209, deep in feeling. If we wished to establish the matter, we might cite most of the numbers in the *Cancionero*, for the repetition of certain turns or portions of phrase is so frequent as to show the musical formulas of this whole school. Thus the music of these songs constitutes a very considerable background for the music of the Spanish Christians.

The question now arises: Is it possible to differentiate the schools whence come the songs of this *Cancionero?* A technical method by which to settle this problem is that of melodic structure, so let us remember that Arab songs of Al-Mosuli's time differed from the Byzantine in form; not in modes, melodic patterns, or rhythms. In the *Cancionero* the melodic periods coincide almost always with the metrical distribution of the Arab quatrain. In effect, eighty-five per cent of the compositions of the *Cancionero* may be schematized as follows:

a b	*x x a b*
(Refrain composed of two phrases)	(Stanza composed of two members, *x* repeated and the refrain, *a b*)

If the two musical phrases which make up this melody are placed in their entirety in the refrain, we shall have *a b*. We have already said that in the music, as in the poetry, the refrain indicates the theme or subject, also the meter and rhyme, which the stanzas then adopt. This may be done in various ways: by taking the first line of the refrain and making a scheme, *a a a b*, that is, the Spanish quatrain, like No. 17 in the *Cancionero;* or by taking the second line of the refrain, making *b b a b*, the Persian quatrain, as in No. 35. These show the similarity of structure between the two types of quatrain, the Arabic-Persian and the Spanish, for they differ only in the choice of the portion to be repeated. The arrangement of the Persian musical quatrain is, in my judgment, more artistic than the Andalusian as a solo melody, for the phrase, *a*, in the third position brings the music to its greatest intensity, passing on to its final repose with the repetition of the initial phrase. Whereas the execution of the same phrase three times over, as in the Spanish *zejel*, is more monotonous, yet this very monotony aids the populace in participating, for the chorus hears three repetitions of the phrase they are to use. This Andalusian form was made less monotonous by subdividing the members of the quatrain or by alternating melodic elements or rhymes, for example, No. 442 and No. 4:

Mi fa sol la la, sol la la
La si do re do si sol mi } Refrain *a b c*
Do re mi fa mi mi re mi

Mi fa sol la la, sol la la
Do re mi fa mi mi re mi
Mi fa sol la la, sol la la
Do re mi fa mi mi re mi } Stanza *a c a c a b c*
Mi fa sol la la, sol la la
La si do re do si sol mi
Do re mi fa mi mi re mi

Total: *a b c a c a c a b c*

These combinations are evidently a fusion of the two types, and in consequence must have developed after the Spanish system was already in use, when composers would probably have liked the idea of getting increased variety in their songs. So instead of an exclusive use of the theme of the refrain, they would have employed others to give new combinations. But even so, we come back to our formula, *a b x x a b.*

Eighty-five per cent of these songs[23] belong to the Hispano-Moresque tradition (Arabic-Persian included). In the remaining fifteen per cent there are some forms altered by vulgar use, beside a few French and Italian songs. But by far the greater proportion are Spanish in character, and a detailed examination convinces one that this music was not influenced by extraneous schools, nor by imitations made at later times.[24]

The two basic phrases, *a b*, are, as a rule, set one in the upper and the other in the lower range of the octave, which generally constitutes the compass of the song;[25] and if popular and choral, the chorus part will be found in the lower register, which was simpler

[23] Of the simple form, Arabic-Persian or Andalusian, *a a a b* or *b b a b*, there are 15 songs; of the type of simple fusion, *a b c c a b*, 65 songs; of the subdivided type, *a b c d e d e a b c*, 227 songs. Some have even one or more extra members in the refrain. There are besides in this volume 25 songs that would be classed *a b c d.*

[24] The later imitations made in Europe in the Middle Ages, such as ballads, rounds, and so on, are clearly recognizable by their lack of suitability to the original choral form, as well as by the neglect of other characteristics, which show that they are not real Arabic music.

[25] See Nos. 4, 6, 12, 17, 50, 53, 131, 144, 150, 159, 188, 193, 416, 423, 426, 442, etc. Many songs are found in the choral form, although they were intended to be sung by a court singer.

and easier for the group, leaving the higher and more technical part to be sung by the soloist. A cadential turn is also customary, *do re do, la si la, mi fa mi,* or *do si do, fa mi fa, re do re,* and so forth.[26] This served to indicate to the public that the phrase or section was closing. And, so that the chorus might have no doubts about their entrances, it was habitual for them to begin on the same note as that on which the soloist closed, then to repeat the same phrase. This is the intrinsic reason for the fixed pattern which we have given as *a b x x a b.*

The music in the *Cancionero,* following the Arab tradition, is meant for the human voice, that noblest of all instruments. With such respect and understanding is the subject treated that one rarely finds exaggerations in trills, appoggiaturas, and so on. Many songs are unornamented, a single note to a syllable. Their compass, usually of an octave, is covered by gradual steps, not brusque jumps. Some are like dramatic recitatives of superior artistic form. They usually begin in the lower part of the register without any appearance of forcing and then develop intensity with graceful inflections, reaching the uppermost note of pathos at the climax. This is held for a moment before the voice descends rapidly to come to rest on the lower tonic.[27] All of this shows a systematized form of expression, complex and artistic, which did not reach Europe till a century or two later, according to the musicologists.

This music uses grave or gay tunes according to the character of the words. The rhythms, lively or peaceful, help in this. They are varied; and some are clearly the same as described by the Oriental writers, *first* or *second takil, ramel, hezej,* and even *makhuri.* Each of these is so intimately fitted to the words that any substitution would be difficult. Two characteristics show the incomparable excellence of the music and distinguish it from the European music of the Middle Ages, written by men educated in the polyphonic school.

[26] The great number of songs for women's voices is to be especially noted; some are dialogues between a man and a woman, and some are indecent tavern songs, like many of the Moslem *zejels.*

[27] Some, however, copy Al-Mosuli's pattern of starting on a high loud note and dropping by alternating phrases of *forte* and *piano,* to end on the lower octave. As an example, see No. 442.

These are tonality and harmony. The songs of the *Cancionero* clearly reveal well-developed major and minor scales with a regular harmonic basis[28] and rapid, unprepared modulations, showing that this usage was already ancient. This is especially true of the bi-modal songs, which are frequent. The tonality is manifest even without closing on the tonic, which is unnecessary. The modulations are not reduced to an alternation between major and minor and vice versa; some have recourse to an alteration of their consonant chords by means of sharps and flats and even to chords common to both modes.

Gevaert examined some of the music of the Spanish lute-players of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,[29] and found an ingenious variety of enchanting melodic designs, with chords foreign to the contemporaneous European tendencies, and harmonizations so little archaic that one would have placed them a century later. The major mode is felt and the final cadences show the modern feeling for the minor by introducing the leading tone in the dominant chord. The melodic modulations might pass for rare even in 1800 in Europe. The music is easily distinguishable from that of the French and Belgian contrapuntists by its lack of artifices. The work of Millan (a guitarist who lived in 1525), especially, implies a well-established tradition and consequently a series of antecedent artists. Millan was not a product of Italy, as Morphy suggests, but a native of Spain, according to Gevaert, who exclaims in admiration of the rational harmonies of the Spanish lutists: "The most important evolution, and the most mysterious of European music, becomes intelligible through the study of the Spanish lute-players."

For a complete clearing up of the mystery he fails to ascertain the origin of this lute-music, which comes from the same source as that of the *Cancionero de Palacio*.[30] The best proof of all is that the

[28] In speaking of harmony, as I have said before, I have to do so according to modern technicalities, even though this harmony is more dynamic than that of the European specialists, whose conception is more static, with chord formulas for the piano and organ. The harmonic succession in these songs is systematic and antedates by a century or two the rest of Europe in these matters. For instance, No. 159 in the minor scale has chords following each other in this manner: tonic, superdominant, dominant, with a final cadence on the dominant.

[29] See his Foreword to Morphy's *Les Luthistes espagnols*, pages ix, x, xi.

[30] Certain numbers in the *Cancionero* were written by Millan.

songs whose words are anonymous and those that are most popular have been preserved to us in the *zejel* form; whereas the more erudite and courtly poets often used later forms, many times the Italian *quintillas*, of which there are about 150 in the book, and these have choral refrains added. Riemann's enigma is thus explained, and our demonstration will reach the fullness of its proof when we show that this Spanish tradition of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was derived from an earlier one, until now unknown.

Let us then go back to a more archaic period and we shall see how three centuries earlier there existed in Spain music with exactly the same qualities which caused such surprise in the sixteenth century—that is, in the Hymns to the Virgin Mary, the *Cantigas del Rey Sabio*.

CHAPTER XIV · THE *CANTIGAS* OF ALFONSO THE WISE :: FRUITLESS ATTEMPTS TO INTERPRET THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE *CANTIGAS* AND THE SECULAR MUSIC OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

THE music of the *Cantigas* has remained through many centuries a mysterious precinct surrounded by high, unscalable walls and locked doors for which the keys have been lost, so that a chronological detour is necessary at this point. The songs were written in a notation we no longer understand, and we are forced to trace back music of later epochs which was derived from the same sources, but written in modern notation, and which provide a key to this mysterious domain.

Various attempts at interpretation of the *Cantigas* have been made, but the difficulties have been the same as in the investigations of medieval music, especially in the unraveling of the manuscripts of the troubadours, whose notation is similar. This latter music has greatly intrigued European scholars, because its study might solve not only the technical nature of the music itself, but also the obscure origins of its poetry, whose strophic pattern has been considered the type for all medieval European lyrics. Jean Beck of Strasburg affirmed[1] that the origin of this poetry would remain mysterious so long as the poetic texts alone were studied. He adds: "The work of the troubadours was unprecedented from a literary standpoint. The most erudite philologist cannot find in the vast treasure of earlier literatures songs that possess, even in embryo, the characteristics of troubadour poetry. The study of its origins must, therefore, be reserved for the history of music, because music is an integral part of the troubadours' work, and because it determines the poetic form of their songs." But the musical notation of these manuscripts has obstinately resisted interpretation. Aubry records the efforts of Laborde, Perna, Fetis, and Ambros, all now discredited. Riemann

[1] *La Musique des troubadours*, page 6.

cites Houdard and Dechevrens, beside others whose work has not been accepted, among whom is Coussemaker.

In our day this eagerness and persistence continues, but it is disheartening to find the tunes "without warmth and life," as Aubry states. "We are separated by an obscure notation, a technique often in opposition to ours. One must give this notation a musical signification which is not apparent, and seems to have departed with its own century."[2] Thus the notation forms a stumbling-block, for it was of value only to those who had heard and memorized the music and needed only a slight aid to the memory, and was of no assistance to those who had no previous acquaintance with it.

Let us examine the methods used by these investigators. Jean Beck is one of those who is, at the present time, working most exhaustively to settle the problem; he has formulated his own theory, as follows.[3] Medieval religious music is obscure even now, and above all its notation is problematic. In spite of the medieval theoretic treatises, scholars have not been able to agree upon the significance of the different notations. Nevertheless, we feel that the comparative method may be employed successfully in following their evolution.[4] The primitive neumes, derived from the accents in Greek writing, do not indicate more than the direction of the melodic flow without determining the exact intervals. The abbreviations, added later in order to show this flow more precisely, still leave uncertainties, and do not mark the rhythm. In later times other signs were added that helped toward greater precision. The Romanic countries followed a different system, that of the diastema or graphic imitation of melodic movements; first, by means of a line that served as a base for the proportional spacing of the notes. Later there were two or even three lines preceded by letters, which afterward came to be clef signs. Thanks to this invention, the contour of a melody could be reproduced with accuracy. By the eleventh century, four lines had come into use. The neumes then lost their early significance and grew into bulky squares, thus developing the squared notation, which

[2] *La Rhythmique musicale des troubadours,* pages 5 and 6.

[3] In his work, *Die Melodien der Troubadours,* also epitomized in French as *La Musique des troubadours.*

[4] *La Musique des troubadours,* pages 24 and 27 ff.

showed almost perfectly the melodic curves of a song, although rhythmically it was less exact. Contemporaneous readers, who knew the movement of their music, could perform it without such indications, but we cannot do likewise.[5]

About fifty troubadour manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have come down to us in this notation, and for a long time musicologists held that rhythm and duration of sounds were shown therein. This theory was propounded by Coussemaker, but a detailed examination suggests a different solution. A comparison of the musical text of one song in various manuscripts of different periods shows that in some the notes are uniform, so that it is impossible to discern the rhythm. In other texts the notation is proportional, with regular alternation of larges, breves, and semibreves (virgules, quadrates, and lozenges).[6] Consequently the rhythm in all of those manuscripts should probably be the same. But as most of the songs have reached us in the rhythmless form, we shall have to turn for our solution to the theoretical principles which form the basis of medieval art. Once it is realized that every verse was rhythmic, we can infer the same of the music that was sung with it.

It is true that old Provençal and French versification is not completely understood, but the philologists have disentangled certain essential rules that may help us. As these songs were intended to be sung, an intimate relationship may be supposed to have existed between the rhythm of the poetic phrase and its music. Dissonances were probably rare, therefore the accented beats of the music would correspond with the verse accents. The last syllable of the verse, that is, the rhyme, must coincide with the strongest accent of the cadence, and consequently the syllable or syllables of the rhyme will fill the last measure of the melody. Another principle of medieval rhythmics is regularity, as shown by the songs which have been preserved, and corroborated by the didactic treatise-writers of the time. Beck came to the conclusion that the troubadour's songs were genuine melodies, sung as solos, perhaps accompanied in unison by another musician with a lute. The use of consonant chords did not exist in this primitive art, but the harmony may be established with

[5] *Ibid.*, page 44.

[6] *Ibid.*, pages 40 and 43 ff.

the help of the melody, because as soon as melodic art becomes conscious of rhythm and tonality it virtually embraces the substance of its harmony, which may be discovered latent in the tonal succession of the phrases and ornaments. Chromatic alterations, in Beck's judgment, are, as a rule, employed only to avoid forbidden intervals, as, for instance, the famous *diabolus in musica fa- si,* or its transposition. The flats and naturals in the codices are good aids in the recognition of the real tonality of the melody.

And finally, as to the origin of this music, he says that he "has not been able to find any positive information about the musical education of these poets." He says in part that the primitive troubadours, and even the more distinguished later ones, came from within the boundaries of Limousin. The monastic schools of the Middle Ages included the teaching of music in the *quadrivium,* the name given to the group of higher studies. This was both practical and theoretical and very advanced, so that the alumni *were graduated as consummate musicians and composers.* Future clerics and noble youths frequented these universities, so it is natural enough to suppose that the Limousin abbeys (St. Martial, St. Leonard, and others) should have strongly influenced secular music. This becomes certain when the troubadour's compositions are proved to have had a religious inspiration; the only song of Guillaume de Poitiers which has been preserved resembles a church hymn (though he was far from religious). The songs of Marcabru, with the exception of the pastorale, have this same religious inspiration, as well as those of Jaufre Rudel, Pierre d'Auvergne, Beatrice de Dia, and Bernard de Ventadour, and most of the other troubadours, including the last of all, Gerald Riquier (1254–1292).

Until lately Beck has had a competitor and rival in the learned French musicologist Pierre Aubry.[7] He considers a long scientific preparation essential for the interpretation of the music of the troubadours. In his judgment one must abstract one's self from present ideas and get into the spirit of the musicians of the thirteenth century,[8] there to learn about both the paleography of that time and the pedagogical principles of *ars mensurabilis.* This is not easy on

[7] Aubry died before finishing the publication of the *Chansonnier de l'Arsenal.*

[8] See his *Trouvères et Troubadours,* third edition, pages 175 ff.

account of the lack of rhythmic indications, for the notes are all similar, and the ligatures give no indication of rhythm; but the music must, nevertheless, have it. Aubry agrees with Beck in accepting the idea of a close relation between the nature of the verse and its rhythmic pattern, so that each verse has a definite rhythmic formula, and it is therefore unnecessary to indicate the duration of the notes. For these formulas we must turn to the writers on *ars mensurabilis*, who show us that there are six moods under which all melodies may be classed:

First mood etc.

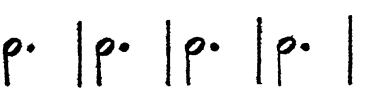
Second mood etc.

In the formulas above two syllables ordinarily fit a measure.

Third mood etc.

Fourth mood etc.

In the formulas above three syllables ordinarily fit a measure.

Fifth mood  etc.

Sixth mood etc.

The last three are rare. Aubry confesses that he knows of no tunes in the fifth mood.[9] He follows Beck in the question of the corre-

[9] *Ibid.*, page 196. He agrees with Beck in the belief that the notation was conceived for three-part rhythm and was unfit for two-part (pages 206 and 207 ff.).

spondence between verbal and musical accents. Where he departs from Beck is in the problem of tonalities. For Aubry the troubadours do not preserve the ecclesiastic tonalities. Never in the treatises of *ars mensurabilis* do indications appear that lead us to understand the tonalities employed by the secular musicians; for about these tonalities far less is known than about rhythmic lore, only a few characteristics being recognized, and these without certainty.

Aubry explains the origin of troubadour music as follows. Two musical civilizations co-existed in France: the treasure of the ancient Gregorian music with its eight ecclesiastic modes, its free rhythms, and its use of Guido's notation; and the music of the century, a worldly production *whose origins are unknown to us*, in other words *musica ficta*. He describes the ecclesiastic tonalities which have been preserved and indicates that this *musica ficta*, which appeared during the Middle Ages, brought alterations by means of accidentals (sharps and flats) and the introduction of the leading tone. This had been unnecessary in Gregorian music, but was demanded by the nature of the troubadour's music, and is to be explained by attraction; if the melody is ascending, the step is raised; if descending, lowered. These new alterations prepared the way for modern tonalities.

The troubadour's music, subjected to rigid quadrature, had no expression. But they were happily inspired melodists, very French, simple, generous, and aristocratic, but still in contact with popular arts, and thus the direct ancestors of the composers of the nineteenth century.

The French music of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the model for all the music of Europe; the neighboring nations being tributary to the genius of France. It was in Spain that this influence showed the most, as seen, for example, in the work of Alfonso the Wise, poet of the *Cantigas*, whose music was written according to the French school.

Neither Beck nor Aubry has been accepted by the eminent musical historian, Hugo Riemann, who says: "Aubry's studies have helped in bringing to light for the first time a considerable amount of music in the notation of the Middle Ages. But I must add that his interpretation is very debatable, for he insists on applying the Franconian proportional theory to these melodies, instead of de-

ducing the musical measure from the literary. From the existence during the second half of the thirteenth century of larges and breves, which differentiate the accented from the weak beats, it is quite unjustifiable to deduce any conclusions as to the rhythmic form of the music of the Provençal troubadours, who themselves were ignorant of these differences."[10]

Riemann insists that these false principles of interpretation have impeded the appreciation of the beauty of the troubadour's music.[11] He is persuaded that these paleographic interpretations result only in the transcription of an inartistic thing. So he separates himself from the fields already cultivated by others, dashes cross-country, paying no attention to the shapes of the notes, and applies the general laws of rhythm that have been the norm in Europe for many centuries, and thus succeeds in getting more movement and life into the music. He believes that the rhythmic signs were omitted from the manuscripts because there was no need of heeding the shapes of the notes, whether rectangular or rhomboidal, with or without stems, separate or grouped, owing to the fact that the rhythm was self-evident in the words. All these paleographic differences had no significance to him.[12] Riemann also thinks that the rules laid down by Garlanda, Walter Odington, Francón, and others are applicable to polyphonic compositions, but not in any way applicable to the monodic works of the troubadours.[13]

Applying Riemann's theory of the rhythm without regard to the

[10] In his *Dictionary*, article, "Aubry."

[11] *Ibid.*, article, "Troubadours."

[12] Aubry, *La Rhythmique des troubadours*, pages 6 ff.

[13] The interpretative methods admired by Riemann are, on the other hand, severely criticized by Aubry, who says: "We utterly contradict Riemann's system of transcription, with its measure of four beats and four-measure phrases. This is convenient in practice and conducive to transcriptions that are pleasant to our modern ears. But Riemann's system is opposed to all that was taught by the theories and the musical texts of the Middle Ages. The thirteenth century had its aesthetics. It is dangerous to substitute another kind" (*La Rhythmique des troubadours*, page 8).

On the other hand Riemann holds that "the best proof of the truth of his theory is the satisfactory result obtained in making the transcriptions of old notation with the fixed values of modern writing" (*Handbuch*, page 7).

written differences in the notes results in more artistic and beautiful music, but, in omitting the values of the notation, is not a new composition created, no longer the real music of the Middle Ages?

The manuscripts of the *Cantigas* are written in the same notation as those of the troubadours, and are said to be of the same school. Some partial efforts have been made to decipher and put them into modern notation, especially by Pedrell, Aubry, and Father Villalba in collaboration with Collet, the most important being those of Aubry and Collet and Villalba. Aubry was in Spain at various times and studied the manuscripts in Madrid and the Escorial. Thoroughly accustomed to the reading of medieval French manuscripts, he found that the Escorial manuscripts had a markedly mensural character and seemed to be easier of interpretation because of the clarity of their writing, in which the larges and breves were carefully differentiated. He considers the Madrid manuscript (which he calls Toledan, for it came originally from the Cathedral there) as the more beautiful. But because of the notation of its hundred songs, which seem to make up the original nucleus of the *Cantigas*, it belongs to that period of uncertainty about rhythmic values common to most of the French song-books of the thirteenth century.[14] He states that there are variations in note values within the same musical phrase when repeated, and is surprised by the differences in writing between this manuscript and the French and Provençal song-books. He exclaims: "We know of no other authentic examples of this system of notation. Nevertheless we are trying without any great confidence to transcribe two numbers from this song-book." Aubry distinguishes the strophic pattern of the *Cantigas* sufficiently clearly; he observes the part played by the refrain in the stanza; he skillfully analyzes the rhythms, though he repairs to classic Greek technicalities for explanations. But he is honestly blocked by that element of first importance, tonality.[15]

Another effort in the direction of interpretation we owe to Collet, in collaboration with Father Villalba.[16] These clearly intend to re-

[14] *Iter hispanicum*, pages 39 ff.

[15] See his *Iter hispanicum* and *Trouvères et Troubadours*.

[16] Henri Collet and Luis Villalba, "*Contribution à l'étude des Cantigas d'Alphonse le Savant*" (*Bulletin Hispanique*, July–September, 1911).

fute some of Aubry's affirmations, especially the statement that the *Cantigas* are of French origin. They dispute neither his paleographic opinions nor those about rhythm and duration, and other technicalities. They prefer a more scientific method of analysis, that of studying individually certain of the *Cantigas* chosen by them as most characteristic, "for only after a detailed examination of them can one determine the limits of poet and musician and deduce the unity of inspiration or collaboration. Is it the personal work of Alfonso or a collective work? Are the *Cantigas* a popular production or an erudite? Are they purely Spanish or is there a foreign influence in their conception? In a given *Cantiga* did the words or the music come first? All this can only be answered by studying the music with the words, and no judgments arrived at by any other means have any value." They disagree with Aubry when he says that the "notion of Gregorian modality was becoming obscured and that modern tonality was beginning to germinate," affirming, "We can always determine the tonality of the *Cantigas.*" They agree with Aubry in the belief that the music of the *Cantigas* is religious and follows the laws of the old tonalities as practiced in Europe.

The attentive observer may note in the work of these two men the different criteria of two musicians of different interests, one the expert and scholar in medieval European musical matters, and the other a Spanish musician devoted to Spanish music.

Aubry published or transcribed seven or eight of the songs; Collet and Villalba have worked over a dozen and transcribed some of them. Pedrell has done a similar number without adding technical opinions. He trusted more to his musical instinct than to paleographic and critical studies. The total result has been two or three efforts at interpretation of only a small number of songs, with direct or indirect admission on the part of the investigators that they are uncertain of having discovered the real key.

So the same thing is true of the *Cantigas* as of the troubadour songs—they are still waiting to be interpreted.

CHAPTER XV · OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE *CANTIGAS* :: THE METRICAL STRUCTURE CORRESPONDS TO THE LYRIC SYSTEM OF THE SPANISH MOORS

THREE ancient manuscripts of the *Cantigas* are actually extant, the first being the codex of Toledo, which has been in the National Library in Madrid since 1869, registered as No. 10069.[1] This is the most sober of the manuscripts, for it has no miniatures, only ornamented initials. There are twenty-seven lines of text to the page, in one and two columns. As may be seen by the illustrations, the musical refrain, present in most of them, is written first, then the first stanza, then the refrain again. It is the most ancient and contains the primitive nucleus of the songs, a hundred in number, as the manuscript repeatedly states. On leaf 133 we read, "This is the petition made by King Alfonso to Santa Maria as reward for the hundred songs composed in her praise and in honor of her miracles." And on leaf 134, "made these hundred songs." These and other statements show that the King's original project was to make a collection of one hundred songs. (It will be remembered that Harun-al-Rashid had already made such a collection.) Later, undoubtedly pleased with the work, he added others, to the number of over four hundred, as found in the most complete manuscript, J.b.2 of the Escorial. Here the festival songs from the end of the Toledo manuscript come first. The miniatures of the musicians, reproduced in the present volume [see illustrations facing pages 74 and 225 of this translation] are some of those painted before every tenth song. The third manuscript, T.j.1 of the Escorial, consists now of one volume, but must originally have had two. It is illustrated with beautiful miniatures and contains one hundred and ninety-three songs. Another codex of the *Cantigas* is preserved in Florence in the

[1] One copy of this, kept in the same library, was made by Don Francisco Santiago Palomares.

National Library, but does not interest us, for it is incomplete and the music is lacking.[2]

According to the experts, these manuscripts emanated from the royal council and may be considered as distinct and successive editions of the work made during Alfonso's life.[3]

Gómez Moreno states authoritatively that the copies of the *Cantigas* (see Solalinde) which include the miniatures and are found in the Escorial were made in some of the Spanish cities, like Seville, which had been reconquered from the Moors. The indication of this lies in the pointed horseshoe arches of the Almohades type, shown in the illustrations.[4] I have studied assiduously the Toledo codex, the music of which is evidently in the earliest form. The music appears not to have been copied direct from one manuscript to another, for not only the notation but musical interpretations show variations.[5] In the Madrid copy, whose notation is the most archaic, there are no accidental flats, but they are placed in the key signature at the beginning of the line. The notation of the Escorial manuscripts is fundamentally different from the Madrilenian in the shape of the notes. In the former they are written ▪, in the latter ▪; a square takes the place of a rhomboid or lozenge, and a ▪ ▪ of a ▪, ordinarily. In the Escorial manuscripts we find B flat used as a key signature and also as an accidental, as are E flat and the natural sign. This is not found anywhere in the Toledo manuscript. All three manuscripts coincide in the matter of square notation, with different shapes for the notes of small values, an indication that they belong to the mensural system. The notes are arranged on a staff.

The Toledo manuscript, the soberest in all ways, has only two fundamental shapes for notes of lesser value, one square ▪ and the other rhomboidal ◆. The square is usually found without stroke or line, but occasionally thus ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪. The rhomboids sometimes

[2] See article by A. G. Solalinde, in *Revista de Filologia Española*, V, Madrid, 1918.

[3] *Ibid.*, page 164.

[4] Solalinde, *op. cit.*, page 146.

[5] The Madrid codex, the one that most surprised Aubry, seems to show personal touches in the work of the scribe. The Escorial codices were made by scribes accustomed to the ordinary routine of mensural writing.

have a line like this . The notes tied together are usually like those in plain song. There are two clefs, C and F, sometimes found on the same staff, frequently alone. On the staff between the notes are written one or two or even three slender vertical lines, but they are not systematized or regular.[6]

Thus we are able to read the notes of any melody easily by virtue of the clef signs. The melodic line, with its ascending and descending motion, is always easy for the moderately expert reader, also the compass of the phrases and the general structure of the song. On the other hand, in the Madrid codex, the intonation is not sure, for the accidentals are often left out, the flats frequently, and sharps and naturals always. There are neither time signatures, bar-lines, tempo indications, nor other shades of expression. The duration of the notes has been much discussed, but is uncertain.

To restore this music, something more is needed, and the presence of mistakes in the copy adds further difficulties.

The investigator, starting with the bias that this music has ecclesiastic tonalities, will intone the songs without other chromatics than those recognized by the respective church modes, and will never attempt anything that departs from the rules; one who considers this music religious will naturally execute it in slow, solemn tempo; should it really be quick and danceable, he will not show it. The investigator, persuaded that duple time was not used at that period, will transcribe it in a triple rhythm, quite unconscious of his mistake, and it will always appear a little disjointed to him. The only reliable interpretation must come after all the essential technicalities are known.

If I have succeeded at all in deciphering the musical notation of the *Cantigas*, it has been through a series of fortunate but unforeseeable coincidences. I did not begin with special preparations for the study of the troubadour manuscripts, but, because my own field was out of the ordinary and avoided by most others, I have worked under more favorable conditions; nor did my starting-point imply a belief in the ecclesiastic tonalities of the *Cantigas*, for I thought that the rhythms must be those described with sufficient accuracy by the Oriental writers, rather than those obscurely indicated by the Euro-

[6] For more detail see frontispiece.

pean writers on *ars mensurabilis*, although these largely coincide. Neither did I completely trust the medieval information in regard to the relative duration of larges and breves, nor believe in the non-existence of duple rhythm. I even ventured to suspect the existence of harmony, consonant chords, duos moving in thirds, leading tone, and so on in this music. Moreover, I believed that during the Middle Ages there existed in Spain a type of music with its harmonic system already completely and very artistically developed; this, through my study of the *Cancionero de Palacio*.

That is to say, I was familiar with a kind of music constructed on the same plan as the *Cantigas* and about which I could feel no doubts, for it was written in modern notation; music which had not been taken into consideration in the attempts at interpreting the *Cantigas*. Above all, and this facilitated my initiation into the task, I knew some of the songs by heart before I even read them, for I had learned most of the popular Spanish melodies of the fifteenth century as published by Barbieri in the *Cancionero de Palacio* through repeated performances. These, as we have seen, grew out of the artistic traditions of the Spanish Moors. By a happy coincidence, in my first attempt to read the manuscripts of the *Cantigas*, I found the archaic types from which many of these later melodies are derived. This knowledge of the Arab melodies popular in Spain during the Middle Ages, and still preserved within and without the Peninsula, made the interpretation of the *Cantigas* so certain that there is hardly any doubt even of the smallest details.

Not all the *Cantigas* revealed themselves with such ease, but, with those first interpreted, I could assure myself of the value of the notes and symbols of the other manuscripts. I transcribed those that were in the key of C major, A minor, and G major, for they needed the fewest accidentals. I also transcribed those in F major and D minor, which had a key signature of one flat. At first I began with the songs written in one mode only, then undertook those that were bi-modal, until I noticed that the same themes were to be found in other keys, in G minor and B flat major. I continued by degrees, verifying every step, until all the *Cantigas* had responded to my efforts. I could determine tonality and accidentals, also the harmony with its normal cycles and alternations and its systematic modula-

tion; and through the periodic succession of different figures I could ascertain that the manuscripts themselves offered media for determining the rhythms in many cases. The Arab histories contained antecedents for the tempi and character of these. Even the timbre could be perceived by finding technicalities that distinguished vocal from instrumental music, and the classes of instruments to be used, the ornaments belonging to certain notes, and the shade of expression suggested by the flow of the melody itself. Meanwhile all the facts of the musical notation were to be respected, even though incomplete as a medium for transmitting the music. Aubry has shown that the copyists of the *Cantigas* made many mistakes; these carelessnesses are to be rectified by using more correct parallel examples and other critical media, in which no liberties are taken, for only thus can a legitimate interpretation be evolved. This notation suggested its technical elements to musicians of that time and can also reveal them to us. The melodies must be translated without modernizing or changing.

Simply and briefly, I have expounded my personal theories, but, as the conviction of having succeeded does not suffice to convince others, the proofs must follow. Then any curious reader may prove the truth for himself.

We shall begin by analyzing the metrics of the words, which are written in the Peninsular Romance tongue, Galician, easy for Spaniards to understand. Neither the meaning nor the metric form is hidden, but, because the lyric system of the Spanish Moors is generally unknown (although it is found in the *Cantigas*), no notice has been taken of the strophic construction.

The historians of our literature all indicate the French and Provençal ancestry of the *Cantigas* and the Galician poetry of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, except that most keenly observant historian, Milá y Fontanals, who found no cause to decide on such a source.

The truth is that the greater number of the *cantigas* are in the *zejel* form of the Spanish Moors, created, as we have said, in Andalusia toward the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century. A little strophe, thematic in character, generally a distich, heads each *cantiga,* and is the refrain to be sung by the chorus. Then

comes a strophe of three monorhymed lines, followed by a fourth with a common rhyme for the soloist. Now to recognize this form in the *Cantigas*, one must keep in mind:

1. That the rhyme is essential to the verse; therefore, where there is no rhyme one may recognize a cesura and not a full line.

2. That the *Cantigas* belong to the choral lyric type and not to the monodic.

It is to be remembered in regard to the foregoing observations that the *estribillo* [or refrain] is not to be divided at the point where internal rhymes appear, and that the stanzas are never to be divided except at rhymes. Thus only may one discover the real form of the *zejels* of Alfonso the Wise.

There are only five *Cantigas* in which Alfonso breaks away from the form of the Spanish Moors to follow the Galician popular tradition, *a a b, c c b*, in itself a simplification of the *zejel*. Nine follow the Provençal pattern. Thus it may be said that ninety per cent of the *Cantigas* are in the *zejel* pattern.[7]

The fact that so many of these songs keep to the same form suggests in itself an answer to the problem as to which came first, words or music. If the words came first, there would have been more freedom in writing them than in the composition of the music, but if the music was first, the words would have had to conform to its pattern. In the words themselves we find indications that the music was the earlier: first, the use of the lyric strophe, which is much more complex than narrative or epic form; secondly, the adoption of a choral form in which the narrative is interrupted regularly by the chorus. It is true that the presence of the chorus necessitates a simple and popular strophic form, but it also involves the difficulty of tying words of simple pattern to more complex music. In this respect there is something factitious about the *Cantigas*. There is a lack of homogeneity between subject and poetic form, even though poetic and musical pattern be a perfect fit. So Alfonso chose the more fea-

[7] [For further data see the Spanish edition.]

My examination has not gone so far as to include an intricate analysis of every verse of the *Cantigas*, but far enough for my actual need. Slight discrepancies might be discovered, but I feel that the result of further analysis would not alter the whole.

sible scheme, that of setting new words to music already known. This may be inferred from the study of the words and confirmed by the study of the music.

The placement of musical phrases in the *Cantigas* is the same as in the *Cancionero de Palacio,* that of the *zejel* of the *a b x x a b* model, the fusion of the Arabic-Persian quatrain with the Hispano-Moresque. It is impossible that this surprising constancy of pattern should have been a mere chance. We find that the melodic forms of the *Cantigas* are derived as follows: 54 from the primitive Arabic-Persian type, 26 simple, and 26 subdivided. Of the later Arabic-Persian type, there are 116—47 of simple pattern and the rest subdivided. There are 14 of the Spanish or Andalusian type, 19 of the hybrid Hispano-Persian, and 31 of the archaic type. Of other archaic types there are eight. There is, besides, a residue which may be divided into two groups: the first, containing eleven, in which the phrases vary much within the same song with hardly any repetitions; and the second, twelve in number, that, because of excessive repetition and monotony, seem to have been altered through popular use. The foregoing enumeration shows a goodly number of songs of the Arabic-Persian type, which, as we know, was introduced into Spain by the Moors, also a number of the pure or hybrid Andalusian pattern.

If the remaining technical elements of the *Cantigas* are found to correspond to their structural pattern, *a b x x a b,* we may infer that Alfonso gathered together the wealth of the Moslems of Spain, and held to the Andalusian traditions.

So now we may hope to interpret the notation of the manuscript of the *Cantigas,* for we already know from the *Cancionero* what it will probably contain in rhythms, tonalities, harmonies, and modulations.

CHAPTER XVI · THE RHYTHMIC SYSTEM OF THE MUSIC IN THE *CANTIGAS* CORRESPONDS TO THE CLASSIFICATION MADE BY AL-MOSULI OF ORIENTAL ARAB SONGS

As THE musical structure of many of the *cantigas* is identical with that of most of the melodies in the *Cancionero de Palacio*, it is logical to think that the rhythmic periods and harmonic alternations probably coincide also, for the elements of a homogeneous musical composition are all blended into one another. If the music is both rhythmic and harmonic, the rhythm will naturally be reflected in the notes of the melody, which must bear some relation to the character of the rhythm. The sounds must also be of such a character as to fit the harmonic formula. Even the number of notes has certain relations to the rhythm; if it is duple, the curves of melody will fit duple successions; if triple, triple successions. This applies to harmonic rules as well and must have been especially important during the period when music had to be executed from memory, particularly when groups or even large orchestras played without scores, making it necessary for the principal melody to give indications of the rhythm that governed it, in movement, cadences, and so forth, and to suggest to the other instruments or voices the harmonic combinations. Consequently, although we have only the melodic line itself, we can find the outlines of the rhythm and harmony.

With this in mind I began to play various *cantigas* with considerable freedom. But the first attempt to make a transcription that followed closely the medieval theorists in regard to duration of larges and breves showed that the technical elements of the songs still seemed disjointed, a fact observed, according to Riemann, by other investigators. At first perplexed by this difficulty, after various repetitions, I found that many of the *cantigas* seemed to be toccatas for lute or other stringed instrument, set to the words because they were singable. Possibly they had even been dictated direct from the

playing of the instrument, which would imply sounds of more or less fixed duration, lasting only through the vibration of the string. They could not be prolonged as long as the sound of a flute or other wind instrument, so it seemed to me completely impossible that the question of duration should have been fixed in the manuscripts, and that it was vain to cavil about it in compositions originally intended to be played on any of the instruments plucked with the finger or a plectrum. Then I began to wonder whether the copyists might have used the symbols ordinarily applied to duration to express the different intensities of beat, the notes of greater value corresponding to the stronger beat, since ordinarily the longer note coincides with the heavier beat and the shorter note with the weaker, and occurs in the weaker portions of the measure.

When this hypothesis was applied, the difficulties started clearing at once, leading me to believe that the notation of the *Cantigas* was essentially rhythmic. Notes of different value appear in the three manuscripts, in many cases in a periodic succession so regular as to show the beats that make up the rhythmic units. Each phrase of the composition contains an equal number of rhythmic units, proving that there was constant isochronism between phrases and fractions of phrases. So, if the types of notes show the rhythmic beat to which they correspond, their duration must depend on the velocity and number and value of the notes in each beat. This is what the medieval theorists mean when they speak of changeable and proportional values of notes.

Only two kinds of notes are found in the codex of Madrid,[1] which are not enough to mark correctly all the varieties of duration. But with the system as explained above, one square-headed note might equal a thirty-second note or a half-note, according to whether the beat was to be much divided. Thus the rhythms of the *Cantigas* might appear to coincide with the descriptions by Oriental authors of the ninth century, which in turn agree with some of the writings of medieval European mensuralists.

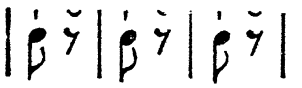
The Arab authors, besides fixing the beats of each type, describe

[1] The Escorial manuscripts have three. This is in addition to the tied groups and a few sporadic figures, like those in No. 80 of Madrid, in which there is one prolonged rectangular note to indicate greater duration.

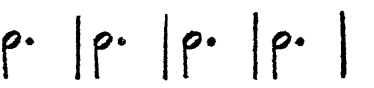
COMPARATIVE TABLE OF RHYTHMS

ARAB SONGS — *ARS MENSURABILIS*

Hezej



Fifth mood of Walter Odington



Ramel

Second mood, *idem*

First mood, *idem*

First Takil

Second Takil

Third mood, *idem*

Fourth mood, *idem*

Makhuri

Sixth mood

their individual characteristics; they say, for example, that both *hezej* and *ramel* are gay and lively. This is not made clear by the mensuralists, and therefore the musicologists usually transcribe them with long notes which do not show the vivacity of the rhythm. The *takils* are slow and calm, and, as we have noted before, all are danceable, which means that the velocity may be approximately determined

by that unit of measurement of all time, a man's step. A lively rhythm will correspond to a man's step in an accelerated motion, the *first takil* to a normal pace, and the *takil takil* (equivalent to an adagio) to a ceremonial pace.[2]

With this preparation, the *cantigas* come into high relief with an artistic wealth not before appreciated. In songs that generally have one note to a beat the transcription is easy, but when the beats are subdivided a mathematical process is necessary, varying each time according to the number and value of the notes. The difficulties are greater when the ligatures, instead of uniting the notes belonging to one beat, are meant to indicate those that go with one syllable (but perhaps cover more than a beat). This difficulty is ordinarily found only at the ends of phrases after the rhythm has been well accentuated at the beginning. We shall later explain how this problem may be solved.

The frequent mistakes in the manuscripts would have almost prevented a solution, had there been no critical methods by which to check them. The whole collection is made up of music so homogeneous that the errata may often be corrected merely by the repetitions. We must first correct the most frequent errors. Thus, one could imagine that a musician might have dictated the melodies, executing them on some instrument, since most of the compositions were meant for instrumental performance. Probably a stringed instrument with frets would have been used, for the sake of accuracy of intonation. There are evidences that the executant was a virtuoso, for often the phrases have different ornaments in each repetition, for the pure joy of elaboration. The musician who did the transcribing was skilled enough to take them as he heard them, but not so critical as invariably to recognize the different rhythms or types, nor so systematic as to make his transcription always logical. Sometimes he wrote a phrase all in square-headed notes, at other times in alternating squares and rhomboids. And again he transcribed the same musical phenomenon differently, apparently recognizing shades of difference in the performance. This scribe-musician wrote the music

[2] Beside this there are prudential limits to rhythm, for, if too swift or too slow, it may be unrecognizable.

rapidly, and was not over-scrupulous about the omission of bar-lines, accidentals, and so on. This lack did not embarrass him, but does trouble those less familiar with the mannerisms of the time.

Finally some scribes, following the earlier manuscripts, made the sumptuous and artistic codices which have come down to us with illustrations and clearly written notes, which they copied mechanically, and without regard to the consequences of errors repeated from the first copy. We have to supply any deficiencies by means of the manuscripts themselves. Fortunately because of the repetitions within a song we have an excellent choice available, for the copyist is not always wrong, and when he writes correctly we find our opportunity to rectify mistakes. These scribes are solely responsible for mistakes in the order of phrases, for they arranged the columns and ornamental capitals, making two or three lines out of one of the first writer. When they were not musicians, but drawing experts, they must have been responsible also for the changes of value in notes. The compositions in which the alternating succession of note-values is regular naturally have fewer blunders than where this is irregular.

Let us now study these note-values with special reference to the Madrid manuscript, the oldest of all, for, with this deciphered, the later ones (J.b.2 and T.j.1 in the Escorial) clear up, when the same songs are found in both, for then we may put them side by side and compare them.

There are two fundamental shapes of notes, rhomboidal and square-headed. When found without either tail or tilde they stand for a single sound. If a rhomboid, it should come on the unaccented beat of the rhythm; if a square-head, on the accented beat; and if used alone each would ordinarily take its respective position. But in this manuscript the square-headed notes appear with tildes or tails at some corner of the head, resulting in all these shapes — . The rhomboids rarely have a tail, unless like this — . Perpendicular lines frequently separate the notes. The profusion of these, grouped or single, is, I believe, a peculiarity of the Madrid manuscript, and may have been a personal habit of the scribe. These lines are found at the end of the last line of the stanza, also of the refrain, and even at the ends of the phrases. From their position it is obvious

that they indicate a stop or a silence. As the number varies from one, generally found at the end of the line, to two for the end of the refrain or three for the stanza, I imagined that this might mean the number of beats in the accompaniment. But there are evident omissions and inconsistencies that make it hard to formulate a rule.

The most peculiar point is that these vertical lines are also found between notes that belong to one phrase. In this case there seems no significance, unless it be to show that the note preceding the line is not to be connected with that following.[3] The separation thus indicated might have different results. If the melody is for plucked strings, the sound might be interrupted an instant, but if for voice or instruments of longer vibration, it might mean a lengthening out of the preceding sound beyond the ordinary value of the beat. This is suggested by finding two lines in the middle of a phrase, as if to imply that the note should be held for two more beats.[4] On this account we have had recourse to dotting the note in some cases. A vertical line attached to any note indicates a second note, either up or down according to the direction of the line. Notes with two tails belong in the same category and move in the direction indicated. This is called the ascending or descending plica. So I have placed a sign, V or Λ, in each case over the note affected.

I have spoken above of the strokes or lines which seem to be a personal peculiarity of the scribe of the Madrid codex. For although lines were used by other copyists of that time, in no other manuscripts are they so frequently and so systematically employed. It seems as if the writer tried to facilitate the understanding of figures indicative of the rhythm, and wished to take account of the multiple purposes of duration and intensity, but, having only the ordinary symbols at his disposition, had to use them with varying meanings. In the phrases made up of notes of one beat in value, either a rhomboid or a square-head suffices; neither is there any difficulty in the case of even divisions of a beat. The trouble comes when ligatures cover more than one beat but are applied to one syllable only. Here the indication of the beats is lost. This confusion occurs in the orna-

[3] See No. 39, last line; No. 51, seventh line; No. 57, fourth and last lines; etc. [References are, of course, to the originals in the Madrid edition.]

[4] See No. 2, eighth line; No. 5, second and fifth lines; No. 28, ninth line; etc.

mental ends of phrases and has to be worked out through the proportion between the number of beats and the number of notes, and, in doubtful cases, by the harmonic skeleton, as well as the melodic flow. Thus a simple table of equivalents like Aubry's is impossible,[5] since the symbols vary at different times, for in the thirteenth century the imperfections of the notation could be remedied in performance by the remembrance of the tunes. As they were less and less heard, correct interpretation became increasingly difficult.

These principles may be applied to each type of rhythm, proving the notation systematic. The *second takil,* consisting of a sixteenth note, an eighth note, an accented eighth note, and a sixteenth rest—a 3/8 rhythm [pages 80, 195], is described by Salinas, in *De musica,* as very popular among the Spanish Moors. Various medieval Spanish songs appear in the *Cancionero de Palacio* in this rhythm. From one of them, No. 102, are clearly derived the modern Galician *muiñeira* and the Catalan song, *Noy de la mare,* with the same rhythm. Moreover the medieval theorists and Walter Odington mention this rhythm, and it is well recognized in our day.

Each measure consists of three beats, two strong and one weak; therefore, according to the foregoing interpretation, in the Madrid manuscript the notes are given ■ ■ ◆. In case each beat consists of only one note, a difference in intensity will be found between the two stronger beats, and with it, longer duration, especially as the Madrid manuscript sometimes gives ◆ ■ ◆ instead of the former. In manuscript J.b.2 of the Escorial we frequently find ■ ■ ■; sometimes also this form ■ ■ ■. That is to say, the second accented beat of the two that follow one another has the greater intensity. On this account we have followed the form as given today in the *muiñeiras* and the *Noy de la mare* and other similar songs of the present time,[6] placing the weakest beat in the middle.

There are various songs in the *second takil* rhythm, one of them the first melody of the Madrid codex, and a glance will show the regularity of the alternation between the square-headed notes and the rhomboids, especially in line 5 [see Spanish edition].

[5] See *Les plus anciens monuments,* page 10.

[6] See, for example, on page 437 of Volume VIII of Milá y Fontanals' *Obras Completas,* the song, "*Presentes al Niño Jesus.*"

Let us begin with the first line, which has several points to be noted; the succession of notes is as follows:

The intensity of the first note, a plica, might be doubtful.[7] But because of its location at the beginning it is obviously accented. This descending plica must be executed with certain inflections as shown by the tildes. We have given it as C, B♭, C, from the belief that before the strong accent there should be a sound tied to it, by way of anacrusis. The second note is a rhomboid and belongs on the weak beat; the third is a square-head and fills the accented beat. As this is written with two tildes, , which should be understood as , it must be decided how this should be divided rhythmically. If the three notes had been written out in full, it would not have been possible to say where the accent lay; but the figure was written as a ligature around the middle note, which is the important one. That leaves the first note, represented by the ascending tilde, to take its value from the preceding note, and the descending tilde as taking its value from the note with which it is tied. The following beats are easier, for each note represents a beat, until we find the two square-heads in a ligature. If there is no reason to the contrary, they should both come within the strong beat, and, as both are square-heads, should divide it evenly. The final note makes the cadence.

These principles may be applied to the following phrases without difficulty; but a few points seem worthy of attention. In the second phrase the rhomboid corresponding to the weak beat between the G and the B is absent. These latter, as square-heads, must occupy accented beats, but each has a tilde , which must be considered as taking the place of the rhomboid which the rhythm here demands.

In the ligature of the fifth line we find four notes, which might be thought to belong in one beat. If this were the case, with the accent on the first note, the final beat would be without repose, hung up in the air so to say. But the ligature is due to the exigencies of the words, and shows that one syllable fits the four notes. What are we to do? Divide the notes among the remaining beats that would complete the regular structure? How then? It is so easy in

[7] Plicas are always written as square-heads, regardless of real value and duration.

this passage that there is hardly a doubt, for the number of notes coincides precisely with the number of beats still needed for the normal period. The melodic phrase is completed by making one note for each beat. The same is true of the ascending ligature in the last line of the manuscript.

The foregoing explanations show the method used for all the songs in this rhythm. One difficulty occurs where the first phrases of a song are made up of many subdivided beats. In these cases one must read through the song carefully, so as to find, if possible, some simple phrase farther along in which the pattern is obvious. Another difficulty comes where one note covers more than one beat. Sometimes the scribe has obviated this problem by one or more lines after the note, so as to indicate the beats that would follow before a new note is sounded. As all the melodies in the *Cantigas* were destined for more than one voice and a varied orchestra, it is natural that difficult rhythmic combinations should have been avoided, for they would have been almost impossible to execute from memory. It may be stated almost as a rule that beats are evenly subdivided according to the number of notes, odd or even, that are in question.

These same general principles may be applied to the other rhythms, *ramel*, *hezej*, *first* and *second takils*, and *makhuri*.[8] The *hezej* is ordinarily used for toccatas for the lute. The *first takil* is usually more suave and tender than the *second takil*, which more nearly reminds one of the modern Andalusian *cante hondo*, and was probably derived from the serious type of classic Arabic song. (The Arabic word, *takil*, means "serious.") The *makhuri* is not clearly described by the Arab authors, but we do know that it was lascivious in origin and was used in low taverns. In the *Cancionero de Palacio* there are some numbers that show their origin by this same rhythm.

The preceding rules and indications cannot always be applied with mechanical literalness in either the Madrid or the Escorial manuscripts. There are, at times, slight deviations that are due to the fact that the scribe was not the composer, often not the performer, and was perhaps unskilled in Arabic forms. But, after all, these little inadvertencies do not disfigure the tunes; and there are other ways of recognizing rhythms, and above all there is one,

[8] [For extended descriptions, see Spanish edition, chapter xvi, pages 118 to 120.]

through the harmony.[9] We may be assured of having succeeded when both rhythmic and harmonic patterns coincide in each period and cadence.

When an archaeologist finds the broken fragments of some object and discovers that in every detail of pattern they can be fitted together successfully, he feels that the restored object is again in its real shape, except for wear and tear. This is what has happened with the *Cantigas*. Only here it is impossible to reconstruct that which was not written down in the first place, the preludes, interludes, and postludes of the accompanying instruments.[10]

[9] Sometimes the rhythmic periodicity has been an insufficient factor. Then one was left in suspense till another song was found of the same character, but with clearer form. That is, the comparative method was used.

[10] The *Cantigas* may be divided rhythmically as follows: *first takils*, 12; *second takils*, 22; *ramels*, 83; *hezejs*, 149; *makhuris*, only 1; doubtful, 19.

CHAPTER XVII · THE *CANTIGAS* HAVE A COMPLETE AND REGULARLY FORMED HARMONIC SYSTEM, SUCH AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN USE IN ORIENTAL MUSIC

THIS heading may surprise some readers familiar with the study of European music in the Middle Ages. The classic nations are generally credited with not having had any harmony, not even the Greeks themselves, for their citherns and lyres are not especially suited to harmonic uses. Moreover, the Greek theorists never seem to speak of harmony, which has been considered a purely European product, slowly developed in Northern Europe. Its first traces appear among the medieval writers of about the ninth century, though until the fourteenth century in a very rudimentary state. Then some Italian musicians began to make improvements. During the fifteenth century the French and English went still farther, but it may well be said that until the sixteenth century only consonant chords were used, with certain prolongations of sounds which produced dissonances. Neither were the data co-ordinated and organized, nor were the connections between different chords understood. In 1590 the Venetian, Claudio Monteverde, used dissonances for the first time. Rameau made various ingenious experiments with vibrating strings that feebly gave out a fifth and a third, thus finally determining the form of a major tonic triad and later a minor tonic triad. These he used as foundations in his treatise on harmony, published in 1722, and this work became the starting-point of all later studies.

The foregoing gives briefly the origins of harmony according to Fétis.[1] Were this true, however, the *Cantigas* could not possibly in the thirteenth century have had a system of harmony comparable in any way to that of Rameau at the beginning of the eighteenth. Any coupling of consonant chords or use of dissonances would have been

[1] *La Musique mise à la portée de tout le monde.*

thoroughly unlikely, much less the dominant seventh, used as a means of modulation.

Now the *Cantigas* show only the notes of the melodies, so how can the harmonic pattern be in evidence? Moreover, they are written in ecclesiastic notation, which is purely melodic.

But most musicologists agree after long and heated discussions that this question of the origin of harmony rests on uncertain foundations, and that authentic testimony is lacking. To my mind, one extremely significant fact has been overlooked, and that is the existence in Spain in the fifteenth century of the *Cancionero de Palacio*, filled with music built on a completely developed harmony and written in clear notation. In it the major and minor modes are defined, also consonant and dissonant chords with the dominant seventh, and bold modulations, not supposed to have been discovered in Europe till the eighteenth century,[2] showing that the harmonic system must have existed previously. And as fifteenth-century Spanish music had structure identical with that of the *Cantigas*, one may venture to suppose that it possessed the same harmonic system. Were not the earlier failures in interpreting the *Cantigas* due to the lack of these data, until now unknown? Their interpretation on the basis that they are subject to the laws of harmony may be considered rash, but as a method of attacking the problem it is only slightly exposed to the whims of caprice, because in addition to the strict boundaries imposed by rhythmic laws there is another limitation. The melodic line has to be accepted strictly as the manuscripts give it, with the relative value of the notes and the accidentals as given or systematically supplied. All these combinations must carry conviction of the homogeneous structure, and sequence of melody, rhythm, and harmony. If the system of harmony is regular, it must apply throughout all the songs; that is, the same types of combinations must be present, in whatever key they may be written, for music has a fixed structure, which, although abstract, may not be illogically treated. For since very early times music has been considered as an eminently mathematical study, by those nations who have had their own theorists.

[2] See the *Cancionero de Palacio*, No. 25 especially, but also Nos. 4, 6, 83, 105, 162, 223, 423, 426, and 454.

In working over the *Cancionero de Palacio* and the *Cantigas*, we have found them constant in form, in ways impossible to explain merely as notions of the various composers, especially when difference of period and geographic distances are included. That the *Cantigas* should have been composed according to free models, with no intention of subjecting their melodies to strict rhythm and harmony, and yet should be found so conforming themselves is most unlikely. Because they are written in the same notation as plain song, it does not follow that they are necessarily plain song.

As we have said, the harmony may only be inferred from the underlying indications present in the melody. Rhythm and harmony are the elements directing melody, the first subjecting the sounds to periodicity, but harmony dominating and giving the highest character to the art. A free melody may use endless variations in pitch and run to and fro in a fanciful way like a bird. But a tune constructed according to the laws of harmony may use only those degrees of the scale that fit into the patterns and the sequences imposed by those laws, for the first effect of any such system is to limit the scale to sounds which lend themselves to harmonic purposes.

Now the diatonic scale must have grown out of the study of the sounds produced by a musical string, skillfully manipulated; those sounds (known as overtones) made by fretting the string so as to divide it into its fractional parts. Moreover, such a string when vibrating sympathetically may teach us the laws of overtones. When any string is struck, its fractional parts, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, respond, and any neighboring strings as well. That is, the string itself indicates the harmonics or overtones, which always keep their constant mathematical relationship to each other, regardless of the length and thickness of the string. How is it possible that the degrees of the diatonic scale should have become fixed without this relationship being perceived?[3]

The experiments of Rameau, said to be the first man in Europe to observe the resonance of the octave, the fifth, and the third, are

[3] I should not dare to state this fact as proof, by itself alone, even though it is a really discreet inference; but, if we later find incontestable proof that, many centuries before the studies of Rameau, harmony existed with the same characteristics as those that he formulated, it may be accepted in explanation.

those that should precede the formation of this scale. But the people of olden times constructed stringed instruments, and the Moslems both in the Orient and in Spain made up orchestras of thirty or more lutes, even up to a hundred. Is it possible that the phenomenon of sympathetic vibration should have passed unnoticed by these musicians? They could hardly have uttered a word, much less a call, without the lutes giving answer, as an echo, with their strings.[4] In order to make possible the formulation of harmonic laws at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the study of the question of resources must have preceded the crystallizing of the scale into degrees. So if the *Cantigas* use the same diatonic scale, and are technically subordinated to the kind of harmony immanent in it, their music will be like other music of this type. Let us examine them and see if the melodic line does not automatically give us the mold. The initial and cadential notes of phrases contain within themselves the germ of the tonality, and more than eighty per cent of these tunes begin on the tonic, third, or fifth, the remainder on the leading note, second, fourth, or sixth. Of this eighty per cent, more than half begin on the tonic, with those on the third and fifth not quite evenly divided.[5] This in itself suggests the tonic triad, and also the idea of marking the tonality at the beginning. The few cases that deviate from this rule mark the notes of a different chord, the dominant seventh, sometimes even prolonged to the ninth.

Let us now look at cadences, and we shall find the same to be true to an even greater extent, for out of 295 songs [in the Spanish edition] 264 end on the tonic, 11 on the third, and 12 on the fifth. This cannot be mere coincidence. The remainder end on notes of the dominant chord. That is, the few exceptions indicate the same proportion, showing that, while it is a general rule to begin the melodies with the tonic triad, it is the rule almost without exception to end on the tonic itself.[6] The few final cadences on the dominant suggest that there was an alternation between tonic and dominant.

[4] The experiment may easily be tried with a piano, by opening the top and speaking into it and getting the sympathetic vibrations.

[5] [Of those published in the Spanish edition, tonic, 127; third, 62; fifth, 51.]

[6] It must be remembered that the manuscripts show only the melody and that duets were possible, in which case the lower voice would give the tonic.

This becomes clearer as our study widens, and we find it not only at the beginning and end of a melody, but in the interior cadences as well. In the 295 *Cantigas* there are over a thousand phrases, counting repetitions and variants, and they give us the same general result, though varying the proportion. For, while the tonic prevails at the openings and closes, the internal cadences equalize the balance with the dominant chord, with a relatively small number of subdominant chords (in the major) and superdominant (in the minor). As a consequence, it is shown clearly that in the interior cadences of the songs the choice between tonic and dominant chords is about even, and thereby the notes that make the respective chords may be determined.

If the melodic movement throughout a phrase be studied in conjunction with the accented and unaccented beats, the alternations declare themselves. Let us take for example No. 226:

mi	sol	sol	tonic triad	—1, 3, 5, of the scale
	fa	la	dominant chord	—5, 7, 2, 4 (6)
	sol	mi	tonic triad	
	re	mi	dominant triad	
	sol	mi	tonic triad	
fa	mi	re	dominant chord	
		mi	tonic triad	

The alternation between tonic and dominant is quite regular, and remains so throughout the song. There are many examples in which one phrase in a song will be varied in its cadence with the deliberate object of distinguishing it. This in itself proves that harmonic alternations were governed by rule, otherwise the melodies would not be systematically changed to fit the various sections of a song. Sometimes the chord notes are revealed by an arpeggio in the tune, swift enough so that the later sounds combine with the still-sounding first note. The compass of the melodies also is shown to be limited by harmonic barriers. Some of the songs cover precisely an octave, others, though fewer, just a fifth, and both the octave and the fifth are derived from the harmonic basis.

Reduced to a table, the 295 *Cantigas* [in the Spanish edition] show a compass as follows:

Octave plus 2 tones	3
Octave plus 1½ tones	7
Octave plus 1 tone	8
Octave plus ½ tone	82
Octave exactly	54
Octave less ½ tone	46
Octave less 1 tone	35
Octave less 2 tones	39
Octave less 3 tones	10

As may be seen, the compass ranges about the octave, and the slight deviations are easily explainable. The excess of one semitone is due to the custom of introducing in this music the lower leading note before the cadence on the tonic. The songs which exceed the octave by a whole tone are generally found to have an extra note as adornment near the climax. The songs of less than an octave in compass are more numerous; this may be due to the fact that many of them have been in popular use and have become contracted through carelessness. Others are instrumental and meant for instruments having only a range of a fifth. Those that cover the seven notes of the scale without the octave are bimodal with the respective fifths of each mode.

Another indication that these tunes come under harmonic formulas is that ordinarily at the emotional climax notes will be found that involve harmonization with chords containing dissonant intervals such as the seventh or the second, or the subdominant in major or superdominant in minor, or a modulation to a different key. That is, at the culminating moment we find the less-used chords, as if the unaccustomed emotion demanded an unusual means of expression. Thus in songs of the *a a b a* type, the *a* phrases will be such that tonic and dominant chords could be used alternatingly, while the *b* phrase demands a subdominant or one of the less-used chords. In the interior cadences the tonic and dominant usually alternate; or, if the tonic be repeated at the end of the phrase, it might be as an inversion, thus leaving a sense of suspense. But before the final close on the tonic there is one significant peculiarity: the cadence is usually prepared by the leading note, either in the penultimate phrase or in

a conspicuous place in the last phrase, with a definite sense of involving a resolution of the dominant seventh. It is a frequent occurrence in various keys and is a distinct notification to the listener of the coming close. The *Cantigas* follow no absolute rule of ending on the tonic, the only chord supposed by the European harmonists to give the complete sense of repose. In the *Cancionero de Palacio* are various melodies that make, so to say, an endless chain, by closing on the dominant seventh, to resolve into the opening note of the tune. They may be found both in major and minor, but in the *Cantigas* only in the minor. Whether this is owing to the frequent use of this type of close or to a survival of ancient tonality, or because it was really considered the resolution for the superdominant in the minor, and significant enough of final repose, that which is certain is that some of the *Cantigas* close on one of the notes of the chord of the dominant seventh in the minor.

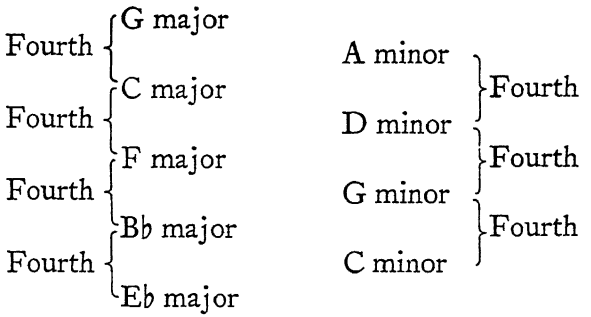
As this cadence has been preserved in Spain in many Andalusian songs as well as Catalan, Castilian, Galician, and Asturian, I easily recognized it; but it has perhaps constituted one of the principal difficulties in determining tonality in medieval music, as we shall see shortly.

CHAPTER XVIII · TONALITY IN THE *CANTIGAS*
MODULATION :: MAJOR AND MINOR
MELODY :: EXPRESSION

THE sequence of harmonies just described gives evidences of the tonal character of this system. The notes of the tonic chord are used at the beginning of a song, followed by alternations of the dominant seventh and ninth, with a final resolution on the tonic. Sometimes the alternation is rapid as if for lively dances and sometimes slower as if for vocal music, but always simple and orderly, with usually the three principal chords in the major and four in the minor. Such simplicity and orderliness was essential because the music was often performed by large groups and always from memory.

We do not know whether the composers and performers of that time had any technical means for expressing these phases of harmony, but we do know of what they consisted. We can express them, however, only in our modern terms. It is possible that at that time harmony was not thought of, as it was later by even the earliest European treatise writers, whose explanations show that to them harmony was static; that is, they considered chords as the combination of sounds heard simultaneously, and sustained long enough to be noted all at once, as on the organ or harpsichord. Possibly in these more ancient times harmony was understood as more dynamic, as of voices moving in different directions. While this movement seemed free and flexible, it was in reality complex and closely knit.

The classic instrument of the Middle Ages was the lute, whose main office was to accompany the voice, with which it contrasted well, for the human voice habitually makes connected legato sounds, while lute notes are disconnected and heighten the contrast between singer and instrument. It must have helped often in maintaining the pitch and in suggesting the approach toward modulations. The close connection between the tuning of the lute strings and the tonalities used in the *Cantigas* is interesting.



These five major and four minor scales remind us of the classic tuning in fourths, as used by Ziryab.[1]

But how can the tonality of the *Cantigas* be determined to the point of recognizing keys that involve the use of accidentals? Sharps had no written symbol at that time, although actually in use, while flats were ordinarily omitted by the copyists, though not always. So, if we had confined ourselves to the textual criteria available, these omissions would have been fatal. But the comparison of the various manuscripts shows indirectly the real existence of accidentals.[2] Melody No. 12, in the Madrid manuscript, is clearly in the key of C, whose scale is C D E F G A B C, as we know. In the Escorial manuscript, known as J.b.2, the same tune is found in G, whose scale is G A B C D E F♯ G, with the F♯ equivalent to the B in the other manuscript. The same occurs with No. 39 of Madrid where the tune is in C, while in J.b.2 it is in G. Consequently the scale of G must have the same succession of steps as that of C. There are further

[1] The transposition of melodies from one key to another in the various manuscripts of the *Cantigas* implies the influence of instruments, especially those with tempered pitch. So we might draw the conclusion that the lute in skilled hands might compass what we now call equal temperament. That would not have been an easy feat for the voice alone.

Of the 295 *Cantigas* [in the Spanish edition] there are 70 in the key of G major, 8 in A minor, 20 in D major, 7 in A minor and D major, 16 in D minor, 60 in F major, 78 that use both D minor and F major, 15 in G minor, 1 in B flat major, 1 in B flat minor, 17 that are bimodal with G minor and B flat major, and 1 in D minor that in the Madrid codex is in G minor.

[2] The authors of that time say, "*non debet falsa musica signari*" (David et Lussy, *Histoire de la notation*, page 120).

examples of the same kind, which would indicate that this accidental was recognized as existent and normal, even if unwritten, and gives us authority to apply the sharp in melodies where the same circumstances prevail, that is, in those in the key of G.

By comparing manuscripts it may be seen that melodies frequently were transposed from one key to another. The song, No. 41, in Madrid and in T.j.1 of the Escorial, is in the key of C, while in manuscript J.b.2 it is written in the key of F with the B♭ shown. This occurs in several other numbers, too. The scale of F with the B flatted has the same degrees as the keys of C and G. In the key of B♭, the E is flatted in some cases, so it is evident that these scales are major scales following a general rule, which may be applied as well to the key of E♭, though this demands flats that were not in use. The same is true of the respective minor keys. No. 20 in the Madrid copy is in A minor, while in J.b.2 it is in D minor, and so on. In these cases the key is easily determined because the flat is written in, and checking up in the different versions where the flats are not marked shows that it must have been a matter of transposition of the same scale. But what is disconcerting is the almost systematic omission of the flat in many melodies that do require it.

As the flat was much used at that time and appeared in almost all the writings of the period, it has been supposed that when the flat was not present it was not intended. But comparisons of the manuscripts of the *Cantigas* show that the omissions of flats or carelessness in their writing are very frequent. Therefore further criteria must be sought for determining the key of the songs. For instance, Nos. 2 and 68 in Madrid have not a single flat, while the same two songs in J.b.2 have them as key signatures repeated on each staff, and so on. Even within the limits of one manuscript, one may note omissions by comparing the tunes of similar themes. There are many of these, but one typical case will suffice. No. 59 of Madrid has flats written in where the note that ought to be affected does not appear, while at the places where that note is present no flat is written. All this shows that contemporaneous musicians were not dependent on the writing of the flats, any more than they were embarrassed by the absence of sharps for the perfect execution of the *Cantigas*.

Tonality is therefore to be recognized even without the written

accidentals, and the accidentals not written down may be supplied, because the music is harmonic and built on a harmonic structure like ours, and cannot be very different from that which appeared somewhat later in the *Cancionero de Palacio*. In this the majority of the accidentals are inscribed as demanded by the various keys.

We can give as a first rule, and that a pretty general one: *The key of the Cantigas may be fixed almost exclusively by the final note*, for they almost invariably end on the tonic. Nevertheless, the slightest details should be investigated. That is, one should see whether the tune also begins on the tonic or one of the notes of the tonic triad and the various other points explained in the preceding chapter. If the result is a tune keeping to its normal tonality, as previously shown in other tunes which have offered no problems, then one may be sure of having succeeded. But if the tune emerges without form or harmony or unity, then it would follow that the last note was not the tonic and that the key must therefore be different from that first supposed. However, we may still be facing serious difficulty. As already stated, only eleven per cent of the *Cantigas* end on the third, or fifth, or on some note of the dominant chord. So, by process of elimination, one has to try all the possible hypotheses, beginning with the idea that it may belong to one of the most frequently used keys. For naturally, with the lute as the principal accompanying instrument, keys easy for that instrument would have been used, and not some of the tonalities available for modern keyed instruments. The songs that end on the third or the fifth were probably choral, the different voices taking the various notes of the chord; but, as only one voice is given, the tonic would probably lie in one of the other parts.[3]

To understand what may happen, it is necessary to treat the major and minor scales separately, and our clue as to the existence of the minor scale comes when we find in use in medieval *musica*

[3] Any technically minded reader can test this, first with the songs in the key of C in which there is no question of accidentals. He will find the key well marked, from beginning to end, the alternations in the harmony, the feeling for the leading note, and so forth. Then he might go to those in F in which the flat is indicated in the manuscript, then those in G, after that those in minor, and lastly those that are bimodal.

ficta the accidentals, C♯, F♯, and G♯. Now F♯ is used in G major, but C♯ and G♯ do not appear in constant fashion, but as leading notes for D and A minor. And, certainly, when one of these two accidentals is systematically applied to the scale in question, the harmony reveals itself in those songs as in the minor mode in such a regular pattern that no doubt whatever is possible. It works out like magic.

It has been generally supposed that the degrees of the melodic minor scale were due to the difficulty of correct intonation in the interval of a step and a half between the sixth and seventh scale steps, especially for chorus. But after much study of the *Cancionero de Palacio* and the *Cantigas*, and the tonal successions found therein, I have come to believe that there has been a general misunderstanding about this appearance of the fifth step of the major scale without accidental, in these bimodal songs. This step facilitates a rapid modulation between major and minor, but has led to the belief that it belonged in the minor scale, whereas it always belongs in the major.[4]

Modulation implies the previous fixation of distinct tonalities, and this can come about only through alternations of chords which periodically return to a tonic chord that makes a tonal center. While within this circuit, the first tonality is preserved; but, when notes are introduced that demand a resolution away from the first tonic and consequently create a new tonal center, then modulation takes place. This is supposed to have been introduced into music about the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century. But in the *Cancionero de Palacio* we have already found modulations into almost every key. Some of these are sudden and bold and imply long-standing harmonic traditions, so they may have already existed in the *Cantigas*. This is found to be true, although less rich than in the *Cancionero de Palacio*. In the latter are vocal compositions intended for first-class artists, while in the *Cantigas* the preponderance is toward greater simplicity, as if for popular choruses. But because of their number and system, the *Cantigas* offer easier means for determining the resources employed for modulation.

The modulation between major and minor is so frequent that

[4] The upward course of the melodic minor scale with its two raised steps must date later than the fifteenth or the sixteenth century, and helps in modulating from minor into the tonic major, i.e., from A minor to A major.

bimodality may be considered as a general characteristic of this school, with the minor scale as the more important, contrary to later European art.[5] For in the *Cantigas,* minor harmony with four much-used chords is richer than major with only three principal triads. I feel that the easy and frequent modulation between them must have been the germ from which has come the wealth of possibilities in modulation in modern music. In minor we find that tonic, dominant, superdominant, and subdominant are indicated. The latter, though of less importance, is not infrequent. Thus for bimodal songs, of which there are many, there are five or six chords available. This supremacy of the minor in the *Cantigas* may be inferred on account of the harmonic richness and, also, the preponderance of the minor tonic as a tonal center. For all the bimodal melodies end in minor, even those beginning in major, and even when most of the phrases are in major there will be an unexpected close in minor. There are only two that end in major, one of which begins in major and one in minor.

One cannot go into all the details of harmony in this first study of the *Cantigas.* But we can see that the modulation to the dominant or subdominant is usually rapid and short, returning immediately to the first key, as if afraid of forgetting it. But the modulation from major to minor or vice versa seems to be more lasting, as if naturally belonging together. These modulations show that the chord of the seventh existed in perfectly distinguishable form, with the same uses as those found in European music in the seventeenth century.

In regard to the duets in thirds, it is not surprising, considering the general musical development, that they should have been used, both those for two voices and those for voice and instrument. A further indication would be the number of songs that begin on the third step of the scale. In spite of the usual closing on the tonic, some songs end on the third, although the leading note in the penultimate phrase demands a tonic close; but the lower voice takes the

[5] Since the time of Rameau, the major scale has been considered the more important and the minor as derived from it. According to Riemann, the minor was considered as belonging to the more backward races. It was the favorite among the ancient Greeks. The reaction in favor of the minor is of modern date and perhaps characterizes contemporaneous and future schools.

tonic. Singing in thirds must have been in use a long time, as it appears in the most simple and popular songs. One can recognize this shell of the duet in so many of the *Cantigas* that there is no doubt as to the intention.[6]

This music was eminently expressive, a quality not found in European music till modern times, and it had all the necessary elements to that end. There was no monotonous rigidity, but rather a certain well-ordered liberty, giving the impression of complete freedom, which, while naturally geometric, rounded out into a complete whole.[7]

[6] [Nos. 21, 53, 54, 67, 68, and 77 in the Spanish edition.]

[7] [For further detail see the Spanish edition.]

CHAPTER XIX · CLASSIFICATION OF THE MELODIES OF THE *CANTIGAS* :: THEIR CHRONOLOGY :: THE ANDALUSIAN MUSICIAN EMPLOYED BY ALFONSO THE WISE TO PRESERVE THE MUSIC OF THE *CANTIGAS*

By taking each element of the music of the *Cantigas* in turn, we have ascertained the bases for classification. Thus the disposition of the melodic phrases has showed us certain definite forms which may be classified as *a b a a b a*, the Persian *dubait*, and its various later developments among the Spanish Moslems. In construction, all the *Cantigas* may be marshaled according to one of these patterns. Rhythmically we have found that they may be classed according to Oriental models, *first* and *second takils*, *ramel*, *hezej*, and *makhuri*, and each of these is divided according to tempo into one slow and one quick form. Harmonically and tonally they are divided into major or minor, while some are bimodal; and, according to the fundamental note, into melodies in C or G, and so on. Another way to designate them is by the greater or lesser harmonic complexity and the chords employed, or by the presence of modulation in its various forms. Their compass may also be used, for some cover only a fifth and others reach the octave. Thus, each element may form the basis of a classification.

Moreover, music is unique as an art and admits of classifications which seem at first to have no connection with the technique, but which do influence the form. The composer of a melody should think of the voice or instruments for which it is written, as well as its purpose, i.e., whether a dance or march, and so forth. And he must accommodate himself to the influence of these elements, and in the end name the tune accordingly, march, ballad, and so forth.

The *Cantigas*, destined to be sung, might be expected to be exclusively vocal, but as I worked over them I found that many differed strongly from the obviously vocal melodies that I had studied in the *Cancionero de Palacio*. In their structure, in com-

pass, rhythm, and harmony, they were similar and showed that they belonged to the same school. But the melodic inflections and certain elements of greater velocity and type of ornament, trills, and so forth, suggested that they might be instrumental.

Comparing various *Cantigas* with one another, I observed that some might be for lute or other instruments plucked with the fingers or a plectrum. This type of instrument cannot sustain a sound as long as can the human voice or a wind instrument. The notes must be short and of approximately even duration, and to fill the rhythmic spaces they must be repeated more or less quickly. Many of the songs are written in this way, and there can be no doubt that this group is instrumental and intended for the lute.

In the first place, many are written in D minor or F major, thus covering a certain definite region of sound; and, from the point of view of execution, this would be governed by the fretting to be done with the left hand. Secondly, most of them have the same compass and similar inflections, cadences, and modulations, as if composed for the same instrument. Thirdly, the melodic line moves up or down with gentle intervals, not brusque leaps, or even arpeggios, probably because the plectrum does not lend itself to rapid skips to distant strings. The reverse is true of the guitar where playing arpeggios is easy, as the fingers of the right hand may quickly pass to strings that are separated. Fourthly, in the parts of these melodies set in that portion of the scale between the lower tonic and the third, one may notice a greater number of quick short notes, as if this were the place of greatest facility in the fretting of the left hand. On this account, in most of these *Cantigas* we find thematic repetitions with regular successions, even to the point of monotony. After four or five of them, one recognizes their close relationship. Lastly, most tunes of this type are in two-part rhythm, as if, when both hands were occupied with the instrument, the head or feet of the performer had, perhaps, been used to accentuate the rhythm.

Another point is worthy of notice. One certain theme appears in many of them, varied only in the matter of velocity and the number of notes, which suggests the idea that they may have been composed as exercises or studies of different degrees of difficulty. For the beginner, the melody is simple and unadorned, with few notes,

while for more skillful performers the tune has many more notes and ornaments. All of these, executed *pizzicato* and accentuating the first note of the rhythm, perfectly reveal the grace and elegant lightness of toccatas for that noble instrument, the lute.

Other *Cantigas* have a similar melodic line and compass, with similar cadences and modulations, but instead of small skips in the melody there are rapid arpeggios that would be difficult for the plectrum. These must have been played by plucking with the fingers on stringed instruments like the psaltery or kanoon, harp or lyre. They are more than apt to be written in the keys of D minor or F major. Other numbers of great velocity, with trills and elevated pitch, must have been written for the flute, the oboe, or other wind instruments, of high register. Others, again, are made up of very harmonious legato sounds, but with a certain monotony about them. They might be for the bagpipe, for they demand a drone bass or pedal-point for their best effect, and a drum rhythm as well. Some have a rich harmonic basis, with slow alternations, which suggest orchestras of wind instruments. Others are suggestive of pastoral flutes or pipes or, again, instruments for military music.

It is surprising to find so many kinds of instrumental music at that period; and the vocal music is so varied in spirit that still another classification is possible, for each song responds to a different emotion. The words of the *Cantigas,* with their stories of miracles performed by the Virgin Mary, would suggest music adapted to epic narration and all more or less alike. But, as the words were coupled to already existing melodies which were of diverse types, the music of the *Cantigas* is found to be very varied. It is in turn virile, rude, military; or suave and feminine; sometimes joyous and gay, as for festivals and rejoicings; again, sad and mournful, as for elegies; or serene, or passionate. In a word, all the human emotions find expression in this music, and thus preserve examples of all those varieties of song mentioned by Ibn Sida.[1]

The songs may even be classified by the social strata of the early musicians, those for palace artists of great technical skill and those for humbler performers, less complicated in character. The latter merit the designation of popular, though that does not mean that

[1] See above, page 82.

they were composed by the common folk, but rather by skilled musicians who had the populace in mind as performer. It will be remembered that this was true also in the Orient. The people sometimes leave traces of their influence on a song, and this tends to simplification. In these cases, although composed for popular use, the song will have been altered thereby, as for instance No. 151, which is found in two versions, one artistic and regular, the other more monotonous, but both evidently the same tune. Often such popularizing will show in the structure, which is sometimes left with only one phrase, *a a a.*

The *Cantigas* deserve extended study in this question of classification. When other medieval collections, Spanish and otherwise, shall have been deciphered, comparisons may be made. The examination of the diverse types strengthens the conviction that the music not only belonged to a system with a long history previous to the thirteenth century, but that the melodies preceded the words in point of time. At the most it must have been a simple association not involving substantial alterations. Within these same classifications can we not find some that offer a basis for determining the time and country in which they were composed? So long as the music of distant epochs and different peoples is little known, foundations on which to settle the chronology of their composition are lacking. The size of intervals between notes has been considered one of the criteria for recognizing the age of melodies, with the idea that in early times the melody would have proceeded by conjunct steps, and later by disjunct and increasingly bolder intervals. Whereas, as the result of our studies of the *Cantigas,* we have come to believe that melody with a gradual flow up and down in its intervals belongs definitely to a state of high artistic development. Others have believed that the diatonic scale was slowly invented, in fragments, first the three beginning notes, then extending to the fifth, and lastly to the octave. Therefore, a tune with a compass of three or four notes would be older than one of an octave. This is a childish way of trying to fathom the unknown.

To keep to the available historical data and the actual structure of the songs themselves is prudent, for the form is so firmly fixed that it can help us to establish their chronology. We have already

found the Byzantine and Persian background of Arab music, with its patterns and rhymes, and it is natural to suppose that melodies which show this form in its purity must have come from that Oriental school, either by direct transmission or later imitation, whether intentional or not.

Among the *Cantigas* there are some on which we may fasten our attention especially, remembering that the early songs of the time of Tueis were constructed of only two melodic phrases, which were repeated, and also that certain Persian elements were considered too bold for adoption into Islamic music. That means that the art of Tueis was simple and easy. Certain of the *Cantigas* are of this type, for instance, No. 70, with only two phrases, one high and one low, and with notes of equal duration except for those in the ornamental passage just before the cadence. The harmony is simple, with a slow oscillation between tonic and dominant. It is in the major key without modulation, and the rhythm is of the simplest, the *hezej*, which Tueis was in the habit of using. Some of these simple melodies are still alive in Spain now, after seven centuries. Might they not have been alive during the preceding four, especially if the thirteenth century versions coincide with the earlier Oriental descriptions that were almost contemporaneous with the early period of Arab art?

In Andalusia, as we have previously stated, a new metrical combination was created in the ninth century, *a a a b*. This we also find in some of the *Cantigas*. Probably the Spanish Moslem musicians preserved this form during the period in which it flourished from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries; and those of the hybrid Persian-Spanish *c c a b* pattern were probably composed in Spain also. Besides those just mentioned, there are some in which we find repetitions of pairs of phrases, with the first phrase like the second, except for cadence; thus, *a a′*, *b b′*, etc. As they are most frequently found in instrumental numbers, they may be attributed to pre-Arabic influences; for at the time when they were absorbed into Arabic art instrumental compositions were less subject to alteration than vocal, as they did not have to be made to fit metric patterns, and so were probably adopted in their old form. Would this placement of phrases perhaps go back to Greece or Byzantium?

I am bold enough to think so, for it is evident that some Byzan-

tine and Persian tunes were introduced into Arabic art. It may be remembered that Al-Mosuli recognized a tune as Byzantine because of the placing of the phrases, even though set to Arab words. This is good proof that some tunes with Byzantine structure were introduced, and differed therein from Arabic. So if we find in the Arab period musical compositions whose forms are difficult to explain through Moslem lyrics, and therefore seem older, it does not seem too daring to attribute them to the people from whom the Arabs first took their tunes. Some of these are so charming and exquisite that we are forced to affirm that they came from an outstandingly artistic people, and except for the Greeks one does not meet strikingly artistic people at that time. On this account, one's inclination is to judge certain melodies, such as No. 141, as belonging to a classical school like the Greek; such is its beauty!

This statement is not final. It is dangerous to talk of what cannot be historically proved, but I must confess that I find no other explanation for the form within the historical period involved, except that of harmonic considerations, and therefore I am inclined to believe that it comes from an archaic period, not distant from that in which harmony was beginning to be really systematized. At such a time the composers, in employing new technical resources, might have varied their melodic cadences so as to present new harmonic combinations which they wished to introduce. Such a phenomenon would parallel that of the present day, in which the harmonic resources have been multiplied a hundred times and have given the present questionable impetus toward re-harmonizing ancient melodies, with endless modifications, done according to the taste and skill of the composers.

The melodies from these various schools must have undergone alterations with the passage of time, but such changes would be apt to leave traces of the original form, even if perverted. Experience makes me think that melodies are of very lasting fiber, although at first sight subtle and elusive. If artistic instinct and taste are perpetuated, and knowledge as well, tunes can live a long time; and in Spain this has been the case, for the people have kept their skill in the use of them. But in Africa and the East, the singers and players have lost their feeling for them, and for that reason they

have melted away like salt in water. As testimony of this persistence of fiber we have only to consider that all the nations of Europe still preserve the classic Persian pattern of the quatrain, *a a b a*, in their popular songs and their art songs as well, even to the present day.

Finally, is it possible to discover the artist who helped in the adaptation of the music of the *Cantigas* for King Alfonso? He must have been a Spaniard and a connoisseur of Andalusian lyrics, for he follows their traditions. This in itself precludes our believing that the music could have come from any other source. But it does not preclude diversity of authorship, nor imply one man's inspiration only. The songs do not carry the seal of a single personal style, either, but the imprint of many composers, all following the same traditions at different periods, with differences of social conditions and needs. All of which goes to show that this collection is made up of a conglomeration of compositions emanating from recurrent periods of the same school. Moreover, the artist did not bother to use music appropriate to the words, for, instead of adapting serious music in harmony with epic recitals of the miracles performed by the Virgin Mary, he used a diversity of music, even dance tunes of the lightest type and unadapted to the words or even to the tonic accents. He was not a singer or he would have preferred vocal melodies of the same school to instrumental; nor greatly skilled in the difficulties of composition, for many songs show slight alterations which suggest routine execution, and in some he permitted himself the licenses of virtuosity. We state all this, not as a lament, but rather in clearing the methods of inquiry. Original compositions, adequate in every way, such as are found in the *Cancionero de Palacio*, would have been very difficult if not impossible for us to interpret. But thanks to the very simplicity of this music, the composer has offered us the means for its interpretation.

He was probably a stringed-instrument player, for among the many instrumental compositions the larger number are for the lute. The vocal numbers might easily have been those for which he played accompaniments on the lute or *cithara* at his concerts. As a professional, he would have done this at weddings, balls, and festivals, or in the taverns where he might have accompanied gypsy tunes or *cante hondo*, of which there are various examples in the *Cantigas*.

His repertory was fairly rich, but even so he repeated the same themes, sometimes with the same rhythm, sometimes changing it, and when his springs of melody dried up he went so far as to imitate military calls and children's songs. Moreover, he must have been a pedagogue, a teacher of a stringed instrument, for we find, in all degrees of difficulty, exercises or studies for the lute.

In the Arab chronicles we find that Alfonso the Wise was on intimate terms with a certain Moslem, trained in musical matters, and named Abu Bekr, of Ricote (Province of Murcia). Alfonso honored this musician to the extent of founding a college in Murcia, where he might teach his especial subjects to Christians, Jews, and Moslems. The friendship must have been quite intimate, for the King went so far as to hope to be able to convert this Moor to Christianity, which the latter resisted. This Moslem might have adapted some Arab melodies to the *Cantigas*, but, as he is better known as a philosopher and scholar on questions of morals and theology, he might easily have been more of a musical theorist than performer, and not the professional indicated by the *Cantigas*.

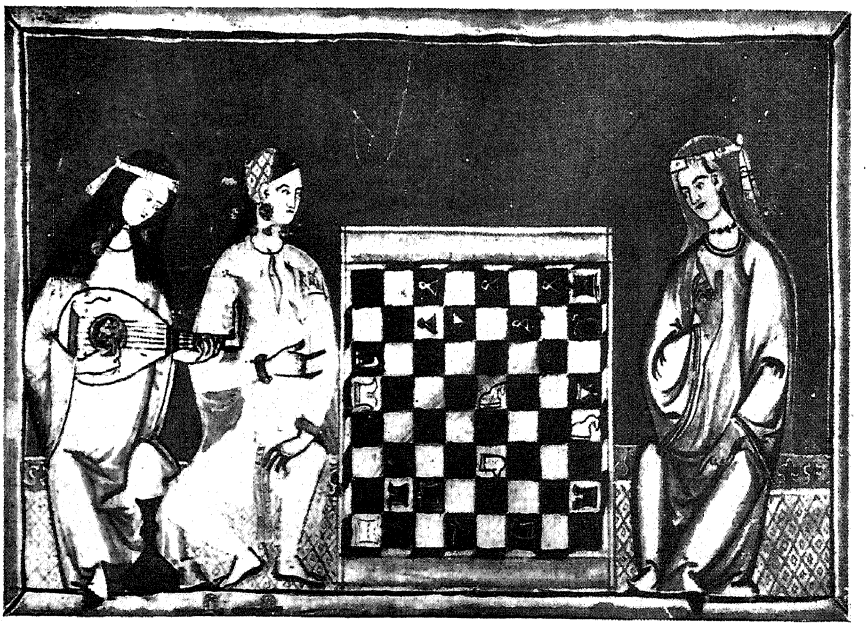
But the King himself has made us suspect that he wished to leave a reminiscence of this artist (at least through the interposition of the miniaturist of the *Cantigas*). For in the Escorial manuscript, J.b.2, there are paintings of many musicians playing on their instruments. Some of their heads are merely types, with no intention of portraiture. There are pairs of musicians who are both alike, the two flutists,[2] for example, and so forth. But others show features so singular and strongly marked that the intention of representing contemporaries is evident. (See illustrations.) Among them all, the portrait of a Moorish musician playing on a stringed instrument stands out. Near him is a Christian, who is looking at him with his mouth wide open as if he were singing while the other accompanied him.[3] For characterizing the Moors, they used the infantile scheme of painting them black, as if they came from Guinea. If, by chance, they painted them white, they put them into turbans and gave them rounded beards, and sometimes, for double assurance, they did all these things. This

[2] [Spanish edition, No. VI.]

[3] [Spanish edition, No. XII, reproduced here as upper left-hand section of plate facing page 225.]

Left: A Moor, perhaps the musician who adapted the *Cantigas*, and a Christian, each playing an instrument of the lute type

Right: Shepherds with pipes and tabors. (From the manuscript of *Las Cantigas*)



Mistress and servants playing a game of chess, with the usual Moslem accompaniments of music and wine. (From *Libro de los Juegos*)

leads one to the inference that the artists used abstract types on such occasions. The same is true in the portrayal of a Jew, for he appears with a robe down to his heels, a pointed wig, and clogs on his feet, but above all with a pronouncedly aquiline nose, although he too is a type and not an individual.

But the Moor painted in the vignette of leaf 125 of the Escorial manuscript, J.b.2, wears no turban, nor is he a negro; he is of the swarthy but yellowish type so often seen in Andalusia nowadays. His face is painted larger than the rest, and with a different type of brush stroke from those used on the other musicians. The Christian who is singing in front of the Moor is at the reader's right hand, and the Moor is at his left, so that he, the Moor, would be actually at the Christian's right in the picture. In all of the miniatures the principal musician is thus placed. The rank of the musicians is also shown, in that those on the reader's left wear gilded boots, while those at his right do not. Thus the Moor is in the position of hónor, rather than the Christian. If he is not decked in gilded boots, it is because Moorish courtesy, then as now, compelled him to put aside his shoes on entering a house, so he is unshod. He is playing a superb stringed instrument and has been served with wine, the inseparable adjunct, as we know, of Moorish music.

So might not this Moor, who seems to have nothing to do with religious compositions and yet is receiving such marked attention, be the artist who adapted the music of the *Cantigas* for Alfonso? That he should have been painted there, the only one of his religion among so many Christian musicians,[4] may be in recognition of this fact. His name? There are documents relating to the Moorish orchestra at the court of Sancho IV, with the lists of the Moriscos of whom it was composed, including their Arabic names, but so far no list has been found of the musicians of Sancho's father, Alfonso X.

[4] One pair of musicians, a man and a woman, appear to be Hebrews.

CHAPTER XX · CAN THE METHOD OF INTERPRETATION USED IN THE *CANTIGAS* HELP TO REVEAL THE TROUBADOURS' MUSIC?

One of the facts that Jean Beck[1] noted is that nothing has been discovered as to where *any of the troubadours* acquired their instruction. As they were generally men of easy, if not licentious, habits, without restraints, and boastful even in intimate matters, they might naturally have told where and how they procured the technique necessary for the composition of their songs. Such silence suggests that they had some motive for hiding it, as had also some of those who introduced Oriental tales. It is a coincidence worthy of record that the Iberian Peninsula was the chosen country of the troubadours from the very beginnings of the Provençal school; the Count of Poitiers, Marcabru, and many of his successors came to Spain, and much of their poetry is full of allusions to the crusades against the Moors.[2] But the predilection of the troubadours for Spain and their frequent journeys thither have heretofore been explained in the light of their influence on the Peninsula; not of what they went to seek, that is, the new art to be found there.

If it is true, as we have already shown, that the Andalusian musical system came in with the metrical system, we can believe that the troubadours made use of Spanish music. Their earliest strophic form, especially that of the Count of Poitiers, is none other than that invented by Mocadem of Cabra, the Andalusian poet of the early part of the tenth century. Only one fragment of the manuscript of the Count of Poitiers is extant, which because of its incompleteness cannot alone be considered decisive. The four songs of another early troubadour, Marcabru, carefully published by A. Jeanroy, Dr. Dejeanne, and Pierre Aubry, with both modern and ancient musical text, make a more eloquent proof.[3]

[1] *La Musique des troubadours*, page 67.

[2] Joseph Anglade, *Les Troubadours*, pages 252 ff.

[3] *Quatre poésies de Marcabru troubadour gascon du XII siècle*, Paris, 1904.

Structurally the words of these songs show quite clearly the influence of Andalusian metrics. No. I, *Dirai vos senes doptansa*, is on the model of the Andalusian *quintilla*, *a a a a b*, *c c c c b*, *d d d d b*, etc., four monorhymed verses with a special rhyme for each stanza, plus a fifth line with a rhyme common to all the stanzas. No. IV is formed on the *a a a b a a b* pattern, related in pairs by the rhyme of the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth; and all together, with the rhyme common to fourth and seventh, a combination imitating the *zejel*, in the ternary element of the common rhyme. In Nos. II and III there is something a little more complex; No. II is of the *a b a b c d c d* type, and No. III, *a b a c d c d e f g h g c d c d e f*, that is to say, a derivation from the crossing of rhymes that grew out of the early quatrain, perhaps as a deviation personal to Marcabru.

The notation of these manuscripts is similar to that of the *Cantigas* in the Escorial; and therefore it is not difficult to assure ourselves of its character by applying the same procedure as before. Let us see if the plan will work. The tonality of Nos. I, II, and IV may easily be determined by the final cadence, which follows that most general rule of Andalusian music of terminating on the tonic. Nos. I and II are in D minor and No. IV in A minor. All three songs are bimodal, consequently I and II modulate to F major and IV to C major, their respective related keys.

The tonality of No. III is the only one that offers any doubt at first sight, for it does not visibly end on the tonic, but on the third. But we may recognize this as a duet in thirds, without the presence of the lower voice, which would end on F, the tonic. Consequently these songs of Marcabru show tonalities like those of the *Cantigas*, and it follows that accidentals omitted should be supplied in the same way as before. The rhythms are identical; I, II, and IV are *ramels*, and III is a *hezej*, all clearly revealed by the indicated accentuation of the notes with ▪ for the accented beat and ▪ for the weak.

Using the same method as for the *Cantigas* and with the tempi applicable to rhythms given by Arab writers, we find music exactly like the *Cantigas* emerging; the same themes, alternations of harmony, types of modulations, in fact, the same exquisite art.

Our method works, then, as before, first for the 128 *Cantigas*

of the Madrid codex, then for the 400 and odd of J.b.2 of the Escorial, and now for the 4 of Marcabru. So we may rest assured of its efficacy; for at this writing we have applied it to other collections of French *trouvères*, in the codex of Saint-Germain-des-Près[4] and that of the Arsenal of Paris, and so forth, whose lovely music has so far been undecipherable.

Our later studies cannot be included here, for they would increase the scope of this work too much. They must wait for our next book, in which we hope to demonstrate the effects which all this will have on European musical history. Once the music is revealed in all its richness of rhythm and harmony, doubt as to its origin fades, for such artistic symmetry cannot be the result of mere hazard; and consequently, it is evident that Arabic music must have been introduced into Europe in the Middle Ages, there to reach such perfection that it could be matched without disparagement against the European music of the eighteenth century.

It is natural that these facts should surprise the scholars who have put their confidence in previous historical investigations, supposedly reliable, but in reality still in need of proof. The history of music will have to be re-written to include a new factor of supreme importance—the Spanish music in the *Cantigas* of the Wise Monarch.

[4] *Le Chansonnier français de Saint-Germain-des-Près*, phototype reproduction with transcription by P. Meyer and G. Raynaud, I, Paris, Didot, 1892.

CHAPTER XXI · GENERAL OBSERVATIONS IN REGARD TO THE TRANSCRIPTIONS AND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MUSIC OF THE *CANTIGAS*

THE thirteenth-century symbols of notation seemed extremely mysterious, at my first perusal of the *Cantigas* manuscripts, in a photographic reproduction, and in trying to read them I had to hold closely to the ideas of the modern writers on medieval musical paleography. Following their counsels my first tendency was to represent each old symbol by an equivalent modern sign, in order to make a faithful transcription of the original text. Soon I noticed that the ancient notation was deficient in special signs to represent some of the most important elements of rhythm and tonality, and also confused, on account of the excessive desire of the copyists to represent certain details that caught their attention but which could not be fixed by the symbols then in use. Sometimes the same symbol would be used to represent different features, and at other times different signs meant one and the same musical element. Consequently, to make a faithful transcription, I had to leave these graphic uncertainties as incomplete and tangled as they were in the original text, for if I took liberties I risked being an unfaithful copyist. Between these two dangers, in case of doubt, I almost invariably followed the indications in the text, preferring to blunder in faithfulness rather than on the side of taking liberties. But now, after revising the proofs, with greater experience and better critical material than I had at first, I must confess that in some cases I submitted myself to textual accuracy with too great docility. Were I to begin over again I should hardly ever use mordents, appoggiaturas, and slurs, except those included as notes essential to the melody within the main notation and in such a form as to leave no doubt about their execution; for in music destined to be executed from memory by groups of musicians the values of notes cannot be arbitrarily treated.

One of the points that confirms my belief in having succeeded in this work is that the greater number of the *Cantigas* are made up of

notes of equal value, or else of notes of half or doubled values, making phrases symmetrical as to accentuation, harmony, and so forth, which symmetry would disappear, were the groups of notes altered in value. It is clear that these confessions refer to details of only slight importance, some of which would pass unnoticed by non-technical readers; but I feel in duty bound to state them, so that my experience may not be lost for anyone wishing to continue the work.

I am more and more persuaded that the medieval musical manuscripts cannot be represented mechanically, nor can the doubts be solved by mere paleographic statistics or minute comparisons of writings. These cannot be omitted, but the work does not end there, for it needs the use of the critical faculty to resolve all questions brought up in the writing, even to supplying the missing elements. Therefore we have not spared explanations, and feel that careful reading of them is needed for an understanding of the transcription.

There need be no surprise at the fact that the words have been separated from the music, for the latter was already fashioned before it was set to the words of the *Cantigas*, and therefore its character is better appreciated in this way. How should we recognize a *pizzicato* toccata for lute, if we kept the ligatures put in to unite several notes which go with one syllable of words? The study of this coupling of music and verse must constitute a separate work, with photographic reproductions included and the notes corresponding to each syllable joined.

As for the adaptation of the music to the modern system of division into measures, some care is necessary. The modern measure does not always satisfactorily show rhythmic units which were used, or at least does not express the different accentuation of the notes contained therein, and this is necessary in order to make the execution of the *Cantigas* conform to their own rhythmic system. For instance, we have transcribed the *second takil* in the traditional 3/8 measure. Each measure may be made up of one note (a dotted quarter) or two (a quarter and an eighth), and so forth, even to six sixteenth notes. If there are six, then let the first, fourth, and fifth be accented [see example, p. 80], for these notes occupy the points corresponding to the rhythm pattern. But each has its own intensity according to its position, the first receiving the strongest accent, the

fourth the weakest, and the fifth more than the latter, but not so much as the former. The remaining notes should be unaccented. So, whatever the number of notes, the feeling for the rhythmic pattern must be kept. This also applies to the other types of rhythm.

The *hezej*, characterized by a quick single beat (followed by a rest), has no common counterpart in modern notation that can always represent it. Generally 2/4, sometimes 3/4 or 4/4, may be used, according to the accentuation of the phrase. Ordinarily two eighth notes fill each repeat, and whatever the measure employed the first of every pair of eighth notes should be accentuated, but with more intensity on the first of each measure (if represented as 4/4). One fact seems curious at first. The *takils*, which are the most complex of the various rhythms, do actually give the greatest impression of monotony, while the *hezej*, the simplest rhythm pattern of all, is the one in which the most artistic songs are found.

As we have said, ascending and descending plicas are signs of voice inflections and have varied meanings, according to the instrument and the relationship to the notes that follow. So we have indicated these places with Λ, or V. This is not to be confused with the modern sign indicating stress. To avoid carrying the personal element too far, I have not put modern expression marks into my interpretation, but I shall give some particulars that seem to me essential. As a rule, however, once the key, rhythm, and speed have been found, the rest may be discovered by the pitch of notes and melodic curves.

In the manuscripts of the *Cantigas*, the one voice that appears is obviously the principal one, which sets the character for the whole; but it alone does not give the full impression, which depends, no doubt, on varied voices and instruments with a numerous orchestra, rich in timbres, if one is to judge by the splendid gallery of musicians portrayed in the Escorial manuscript, J.b.2 [facing page 7].

Here are the instruments:

No. I represents two musicians, each playing a *vihuela*, predecessor of the guitar—one with a bow, playing the melody, the other with a plectrum, playing the accompaniment.

No. II shows two musicians playing instruments similar to the preceding.

No. III, two musicians with lutes.

No. IV, two musicians with psalteries or (half) kanoons.

No. V, two musicians with kanoons.

No. VI, two musicians with treble flutes.

No. VII, two musicians with psalteries.

No. VIII, two musicians with kanoons (whole).

No. IX, two musicians with *vihuelas* and plectrum.

No. X, a musician playing a rebec (or *vihuela*) with bow.

No. XI, two musicians with rebecs.

No. XII, two musicians (one a Moor, the other a Christian) with citherns or large guitars and plectrums. [See page 225.]

No. XIII, two with pandores.

No. XIV, two with pandores.

No. XV, two musicians with citherns or little lutes.

No. XVI, two musicians, each with his *organistrum rota* or hurdy-gurdy.

No. XVII, two musicians, one with rebec and the other with large lute.

No. XVIII, a musician with small carillon.

No. XIX, two musicians with cymbals.

No. XX, a musician with portable organ.

No. XXI, two musicians with *vihuelas* and bows.

No. XXII, two musicians with double flutes.

No. XXIII, two musicians with flageolets.

No. XXIV, two musicians with German flutes.

No. XXV, two musicians with horns or bass horns.

No. XXVI, two musicians with flageolets or bagpipes.

No. XXVII, two musicians with horns or pastoral flutes.

No. XXVIII, two musicians with bagpipes.

No. XXIX, a musician with psaltery.

No. XXX, a Jewish (?) musician playing a horn or pastoral flute and a Jewess playing a timbrel or *darbuka*.

No. XXXI, two musicians with flageolets.

No. XXXII, two musicians with Moorish musical pipes or trumpets.

No. XXXIII, a musician with flageolets and a woman with clappers.

No. XXXIV, two shepherds playing flutes or pipes.
No. XXXV, a musician with bagpipe.
No. XXXVI, two musicians, each playing a pair of flutes.
No. XXXVII, two shepherds with pipes and tabors.
No. XXXVIII, two musicians with harps.
No. XXXIX, two musicians with flageolets.
No. XL, musician with carillon.

We have already stated that some of the *cantigas* were originally instrumental and some vocal, but even the latter needed some kind of instrumental accompaniment. I would not presume to say just what note was executed on each beat, but it is not too bold to suppose that the office of accompanist would have been considered as of less importance than that of singer. And although every part of an artistic whole is important, nevertheless some parts may be more or less routine in character, and accompanying is one of these, for it may be done with stereotyped formulas.

As a practical illustration of how, to my mind, the *Cantigas* might have been performed, I have harmonized twenty-four, apart from the four songs of Marcabru. They would undoubtedly have gained in aesthetic effect if some skilled composer had harmonized them instead of myself. But it seemed to me difficult to transmit the intimate feeling that remains in the soul after a personal experience, and without it another would have been unable to pass on the impression. Perhaps these scruples are exaggerated. Most probably the thirteenth-century musicians did not all accompany alike, for the great player would not have stopped merely at marking rhythm and harmony, but would have made his instrument sing also, even if only in the preludes and endings; while the apprentice would have done something simpler. It has been my intention, where I have felt that sustained harmonies dominated, because the melody was made up of notes of long duration, to set an accompaniment in full harmony, as No. 40,[1] or using a pedal point as in No. 1, which seems to me like a tune for the bagpipes. Where I have sensed the arpeggios of stringed instruments I have used them in the accompaniment, making sure that they would be essentially rhythmic. Melodic

[1] [Not here reproduced. See Spanish edition.]

accompaniments I have dared to use only in a few numbers whose melody called for a singing character in the accompanying instruments. And all are in simple form, such as I felt my experience authorized. I have never been a composer (until now).

I have arranged them for piano, for, in addition to being the instrument with which I am most familiar, it is, on the whole, the best accommodated to the *Cantigas*. Historically it developed from the stringed instrument family, especially the lute. Moreover, it is the most available for the public. But some of the songs can be really appreciated only when sung, or played on an instrument capable of real legato quality.

A complete restoration of Alfonso's music could be accomplished only by a group of singers with an orchestra of the types and timbres as painted in the manuscripts of the *Cantigas*. That would be difficult today, even if we could put ourselves really into their places in imagination, for it is impossible to reconstitute the words as they were at the time of composition. We may approximately trace the sentiments expressed, but we cannot get the full picture. The music should be heard with all the surroundings for which it was composed. In some books of Alfonso the Wise, intimate scenes inside Moorish houses are illustrated, for instance, a game of chess between two Moors, and one between two women,[2] a Christian and a Moor, with a slave-girl playing a harp or a lute; but they are all slight as representations.

So finally, as we cannot make a complete picture, we must content ourselves with what we have. For within an imperfect notation, in which a melodic line of doubtful intonation, uncertain rhythms, and inextricable tonalities can with difficulty be discovered, compositions come to light such as must have greeted the ears of Fray Juan Gil de Zamora, the contemporary of Alfonso the Wise, who said of the monarch:

"Multas et perpulchras composuit cantilenas, sonis convenientibus et proportionibus musicis modulatas."[3]

[2] [See the frontispiece to this volume.]

[3] "He composed many very beautiful songs, set to appropriate notes and rhythms." See Volume I of the *Cantigas* (Valmar Edition), page 126.

APPENDIX

SONGS FROM *LAS CANTIGAS*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE AS TO SELECTION OF SONGS

There are two hundred and ninety-five songs in the Spanish edition of this book, including examples of all the classic Arabic rhythms, *hezej, first* and *second takils, makhuri,* and *ramel.* They are there reproduced both in modern notation and in the original Gregorian notation. Here the reader will find two songs, Nos. 29 and 30, given in Gregorian writing as a specimen page, with forty-three songs in the modern form. These are the songs mentioned in the text as noteworthy in one way or another, and among them all the rhythms are represented. In this way the reader's judgment on the character and charm of the music may be satisfactorily formed, even without access to the greater number of songs in the original volume. But this does not mean that many lovely melodies have not had to be omitted here. It is to be hoped that in time more of the big libraries of the country will own the original edition for reference purposes.

In Señor Ribera's edition twenty-four songs are also given with an accompaniment, a reconstruction of what might have been used for lute or other instrument of the period. These have been omitted here to save space and expense.

The numbers as given in the Spanish volume are retained to facilitate reference.

LIST OF SONGS

FROM MS 10069, LA BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE MADRID

(See frontispiece)

Cantiga XXVIII, fol. 38, rev., and 39, rev.

Cantiga XXIX, fol. 39, obv., and 39, rev.

MUSICAL TEXTS TRANSCRIBED IN MODERN NOTATION FROM THE MADRID CODEX OF *LAS CANTIGAS*[1]

No. 1.**Second takil.* Quick tempo.
No. 6. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 9. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 10. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 11.**Second takil.*
No. 13. *Makhuri.* Slow tempo.
No. 20. *Second takil.* Quick tempo.
No. 23. *Hezej.* Slow tempo.
No. 29.**Makhuri.* Quick tempo.
No. 30. *First takil.* Slow tempo.
No. 35. *Hezej.* Slow tempo.
No. 39. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 40. *Ramel.* Slow tempo.
No. 41. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 42. *Second takil.*
No. 44. *Hezej.* Slow tempo.
No. 48. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 54. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 64. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 65. *First takil.*
No. 66. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 69.**Second takil.*
No. 74. *Second takil.* Quick tempo.
No. 78. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 84. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 98. *Hezej.* Slow tempo.
No. 101. *First takil.*
No. 105. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 109.**First takil* or *makhuri.*

MODERN TRANSCRIPTION OF *LAS CANTIGAS* FROM MS J.b.2 IN EL ESCORIAL

No. 138. *First takil.*
No. 141. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 145. *Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 151. *First takil.* Quick tempo.
No. 157. *First takil.* Quick tempo.
No. 202. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 220. *Ramel.*
No. 226.**Hezej.* Quick tempo.
No. 233.**First takil.* Slow tempo.
No. 245. *Ramel.* Slow tempo.
No. 247. *Ramel.* Quick tempo.
No. 249. *First takil.* Slow tempo.
No. 293.**First takil.* Slow tempo.
No. 295.**Ramel.* Quick tempo.

* Harmonized in Spanish edition.

[1] Numbers of the songs as used in the Spanish edition are retained here.

MUSICAL TEXTS TRANSCRIBED IN MODERN NOTATION FROM THE MADRID CODEX OF *LAS CANTIGAS*

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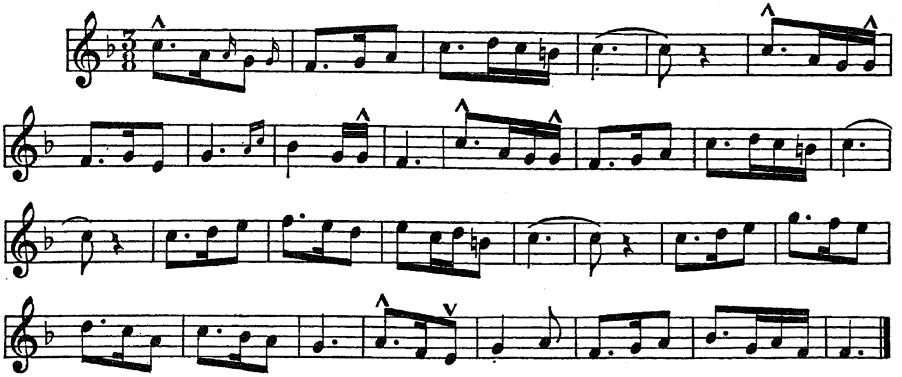
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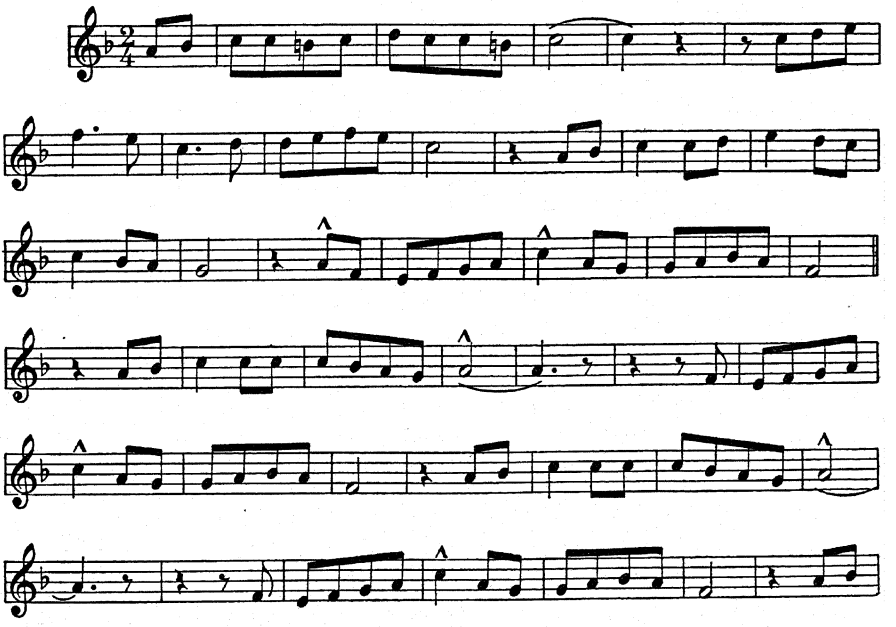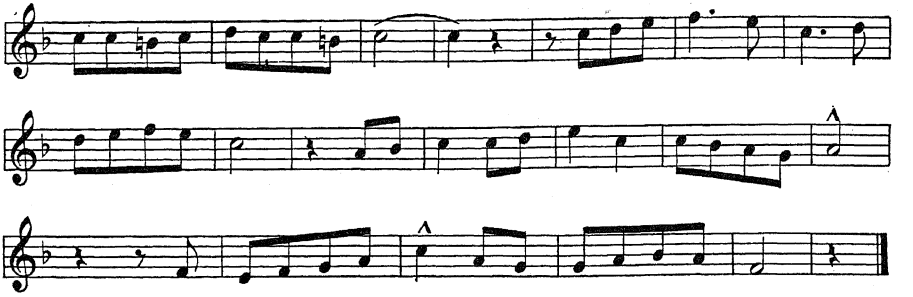
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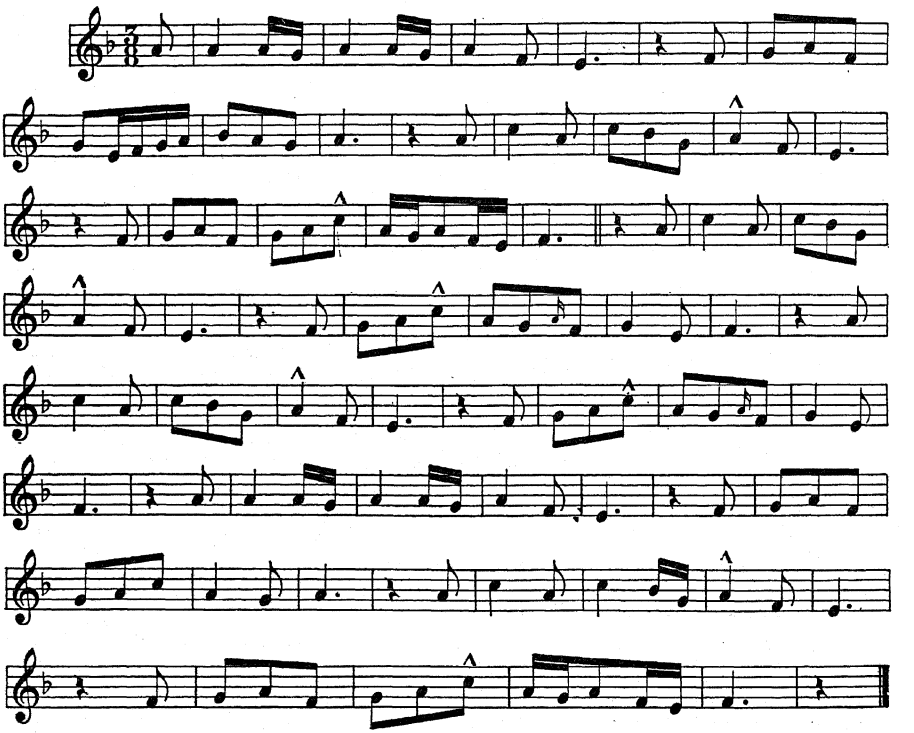
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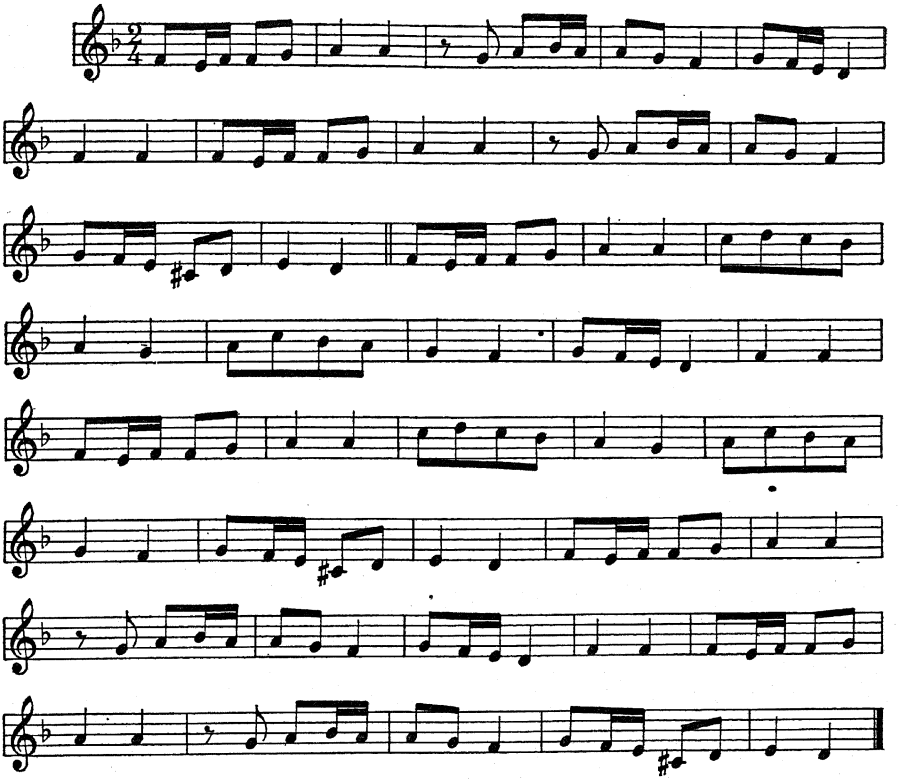
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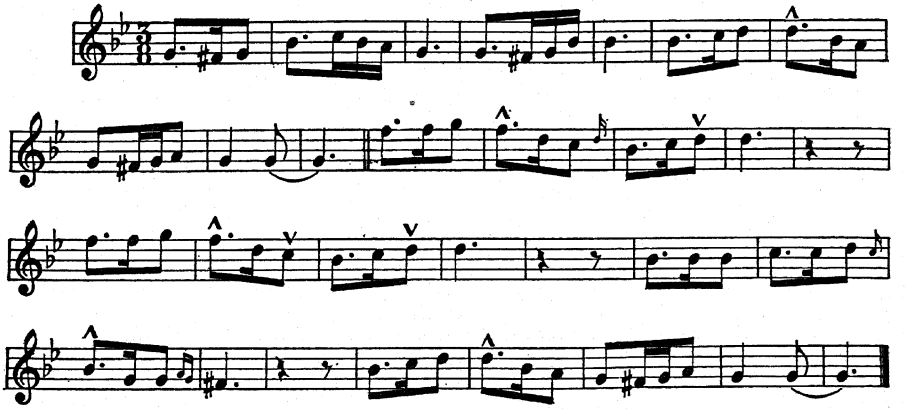
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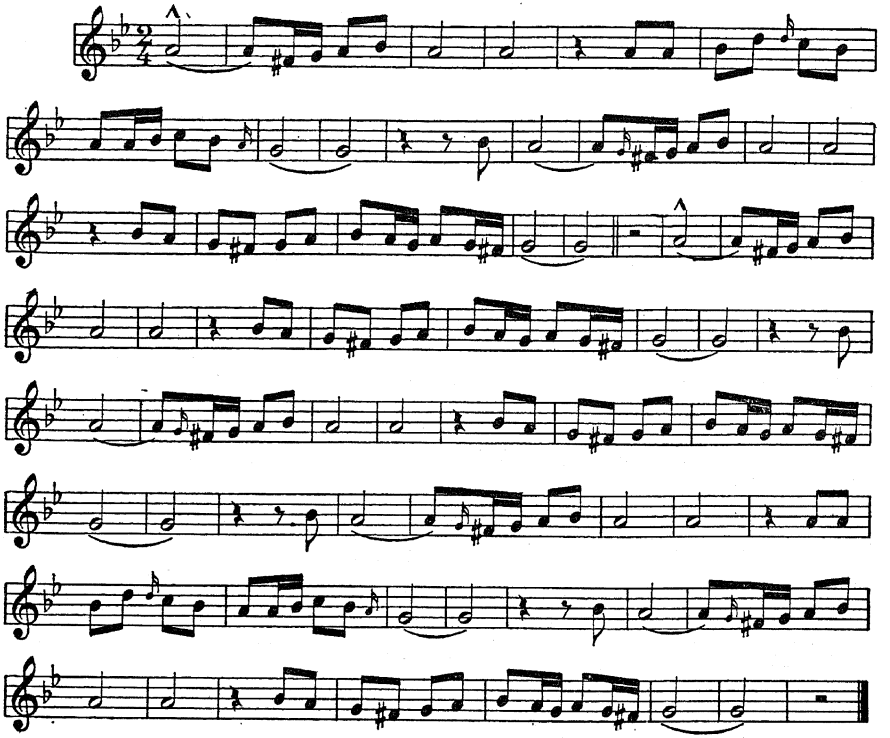
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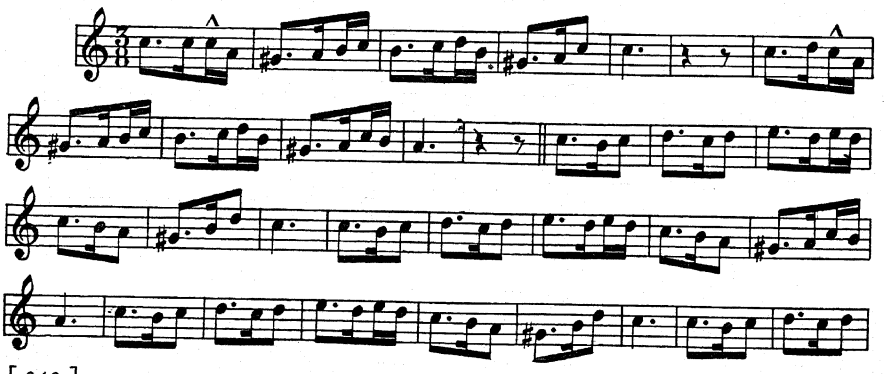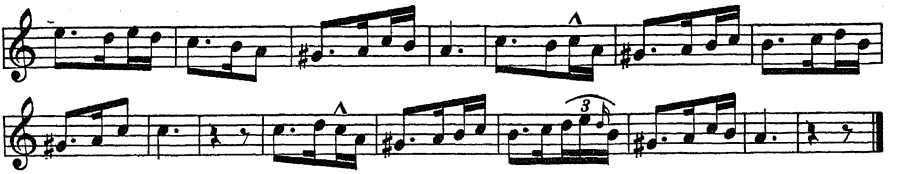
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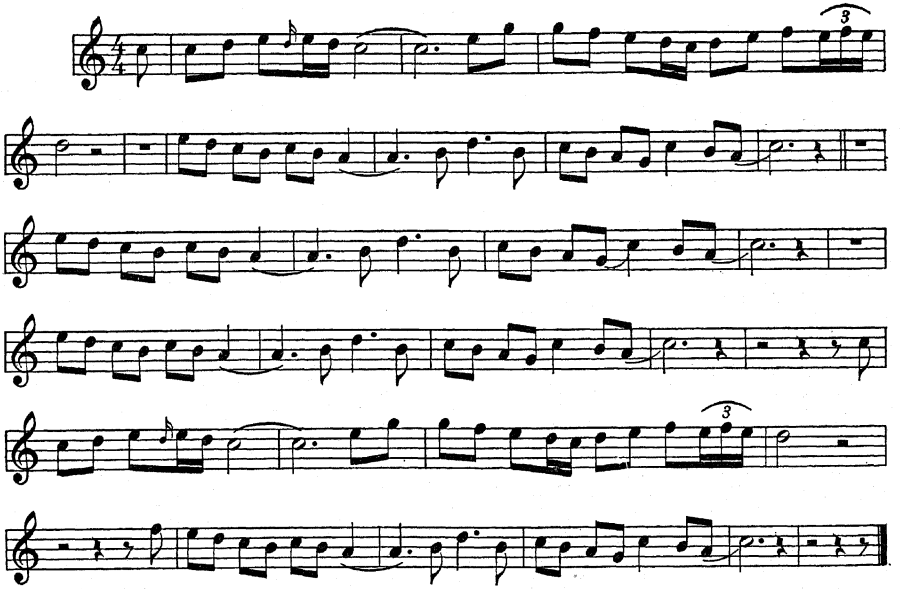
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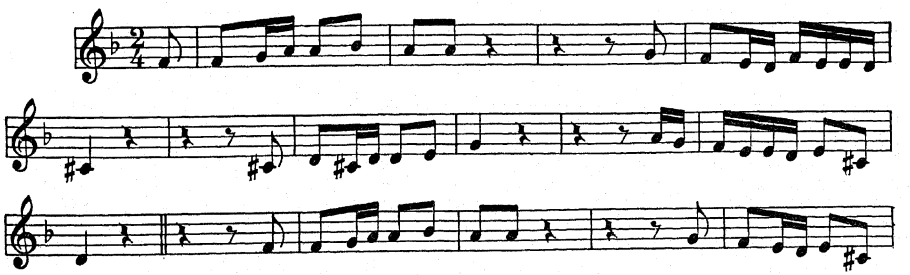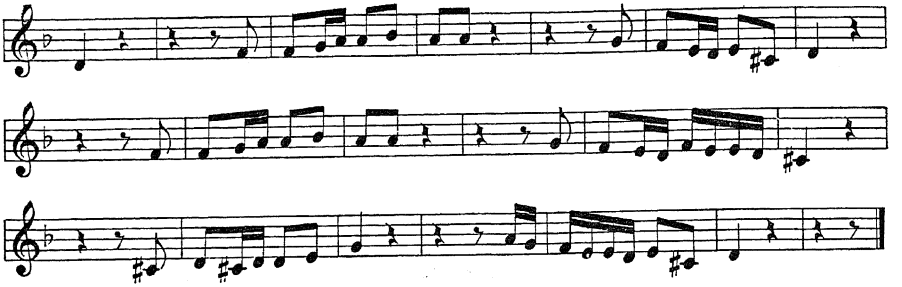
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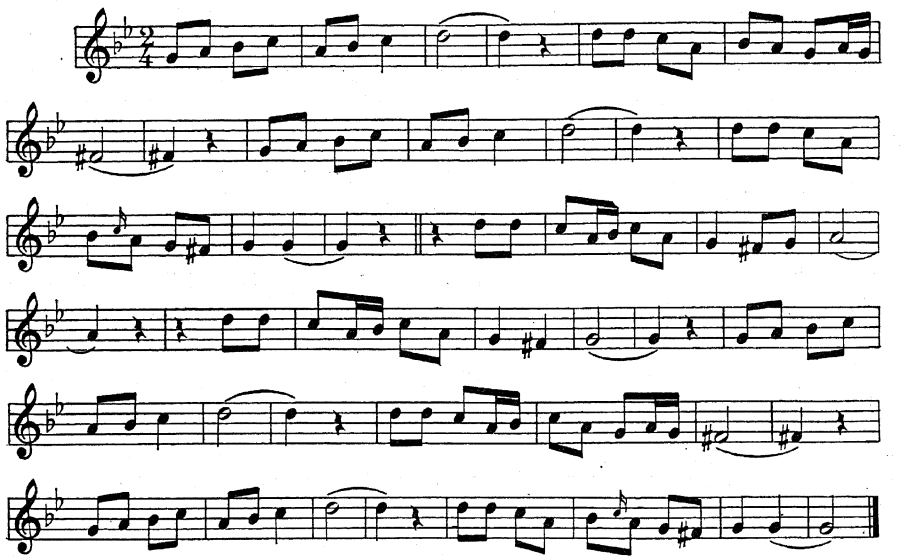
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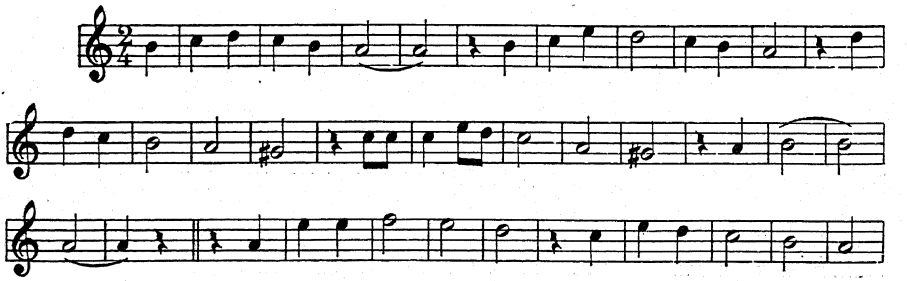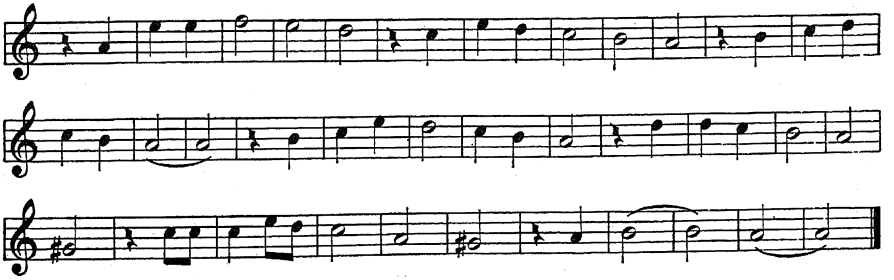
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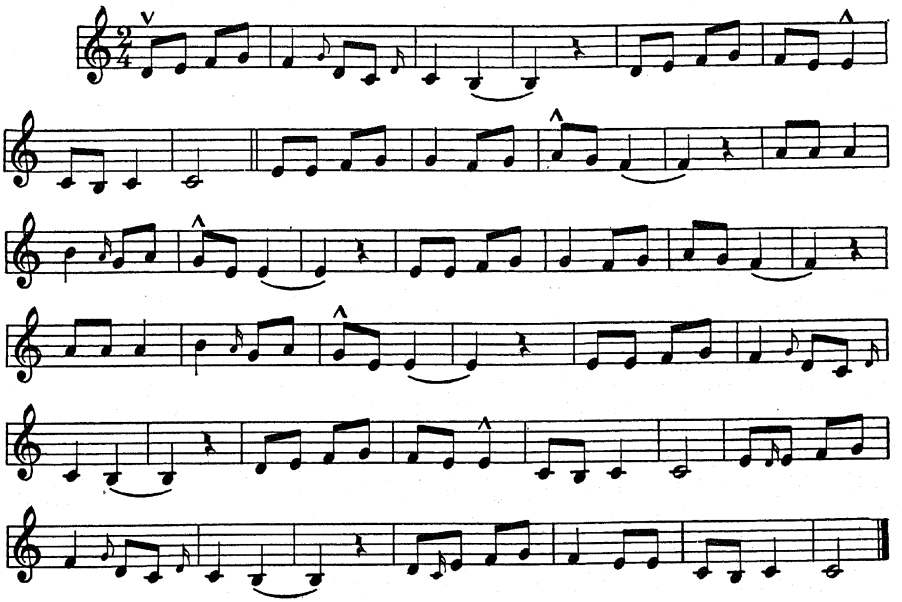
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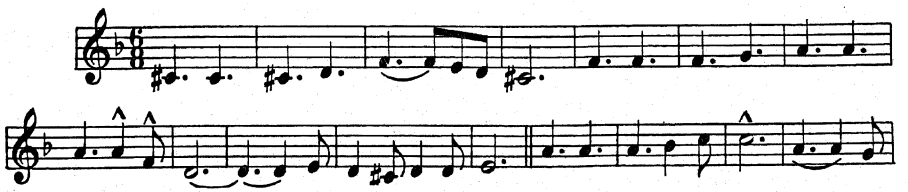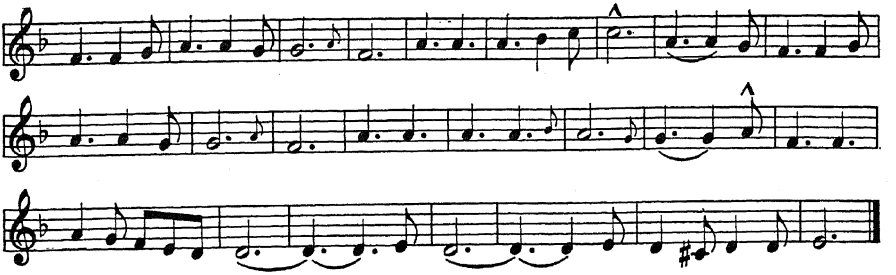
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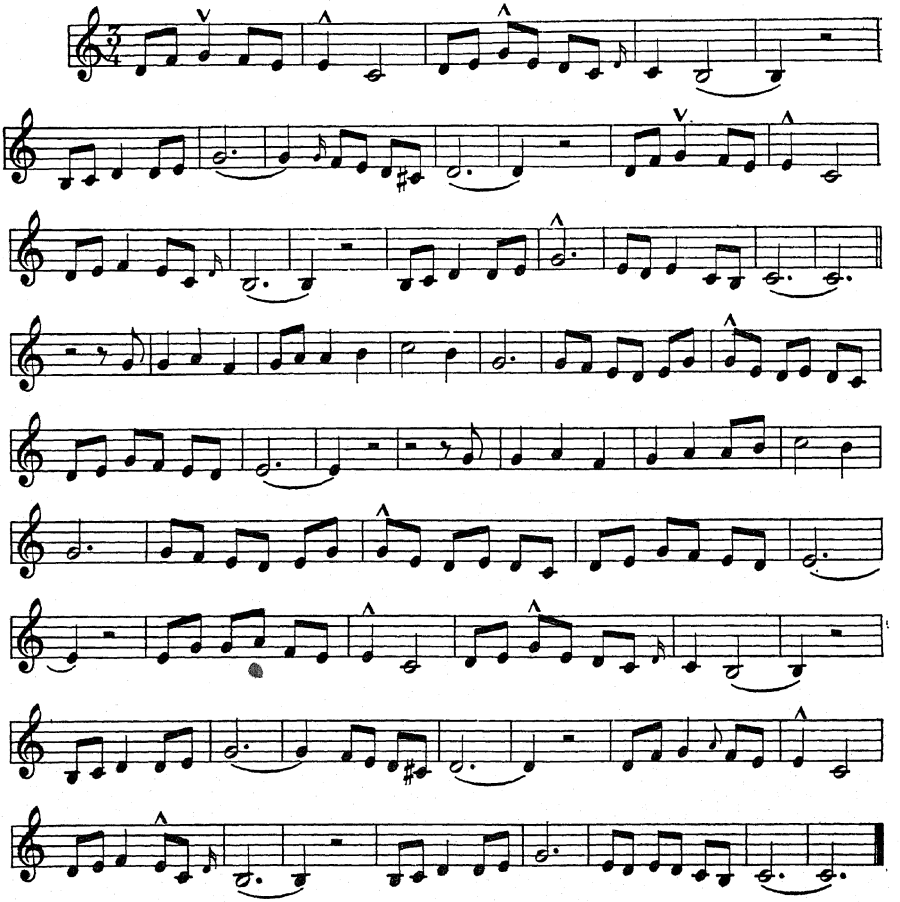
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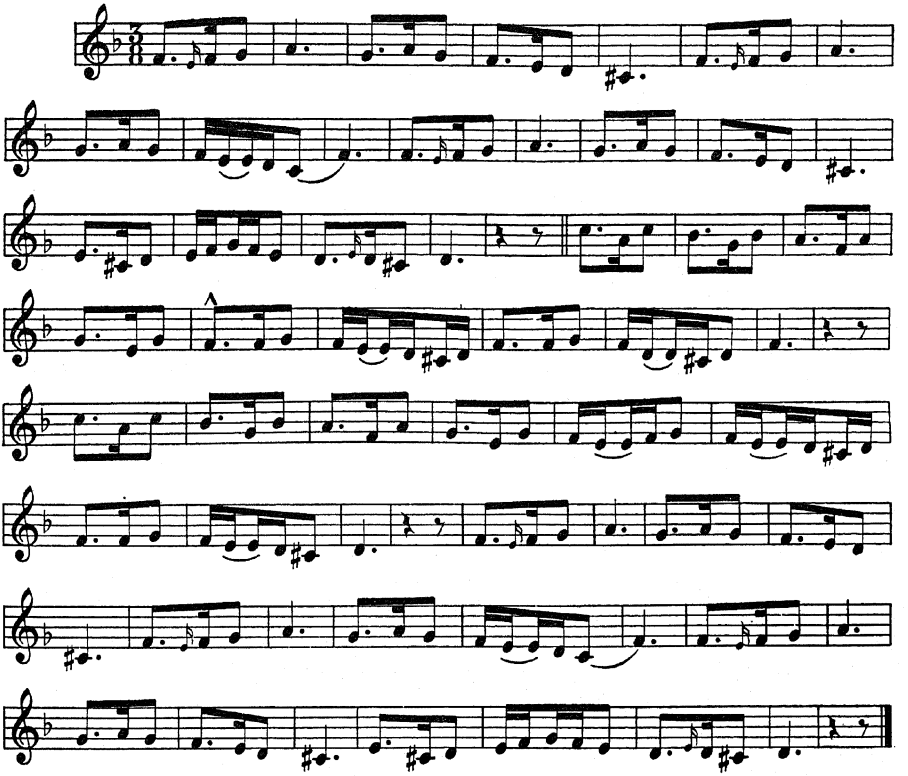
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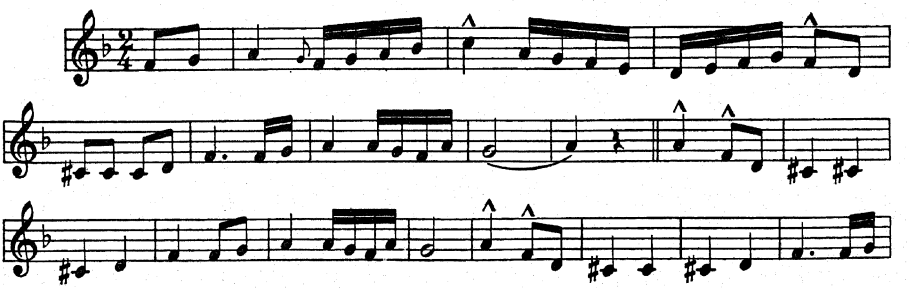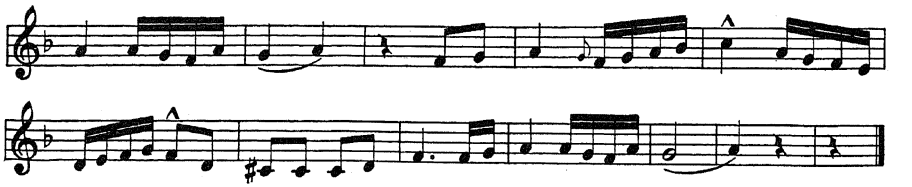

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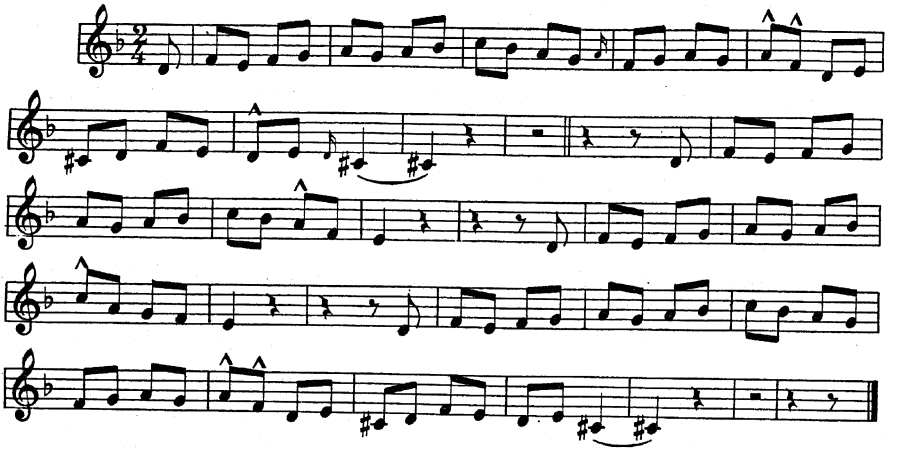
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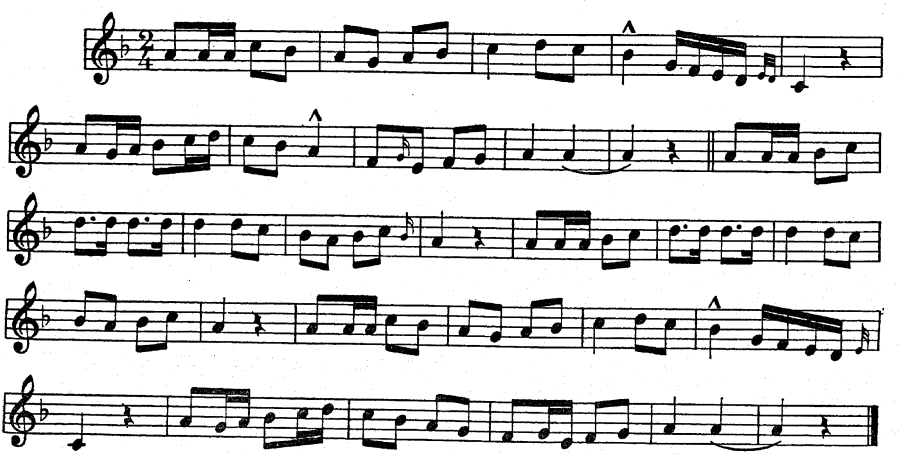
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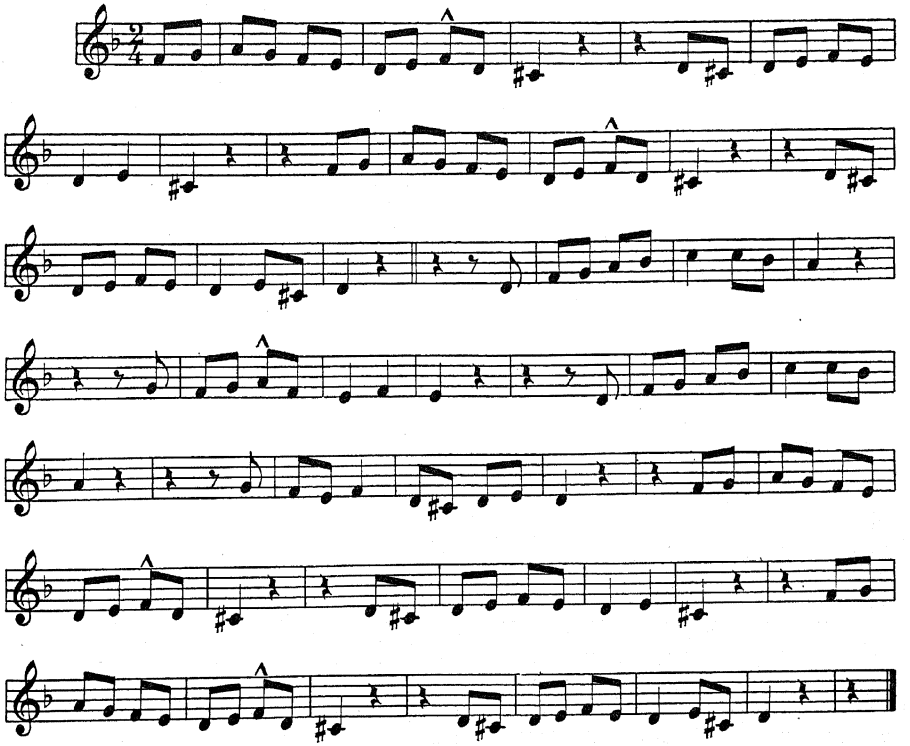
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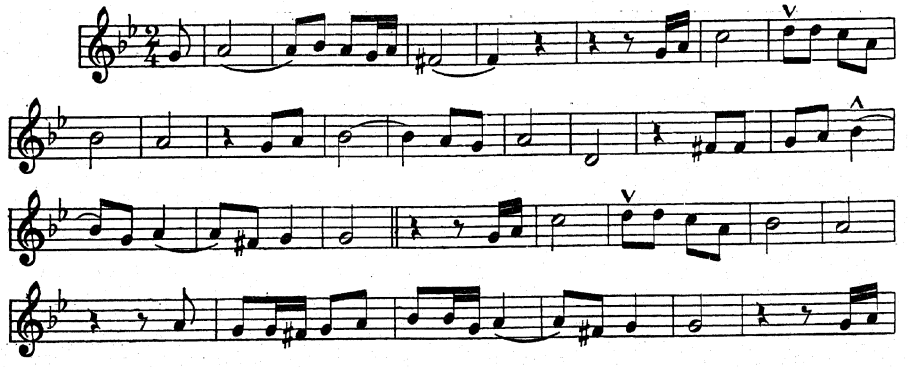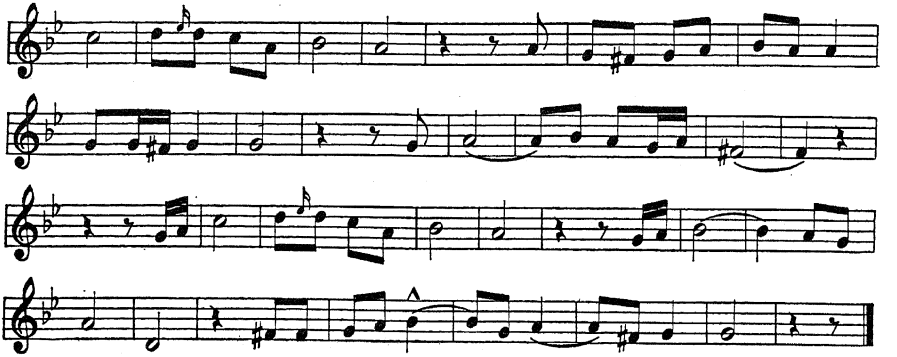
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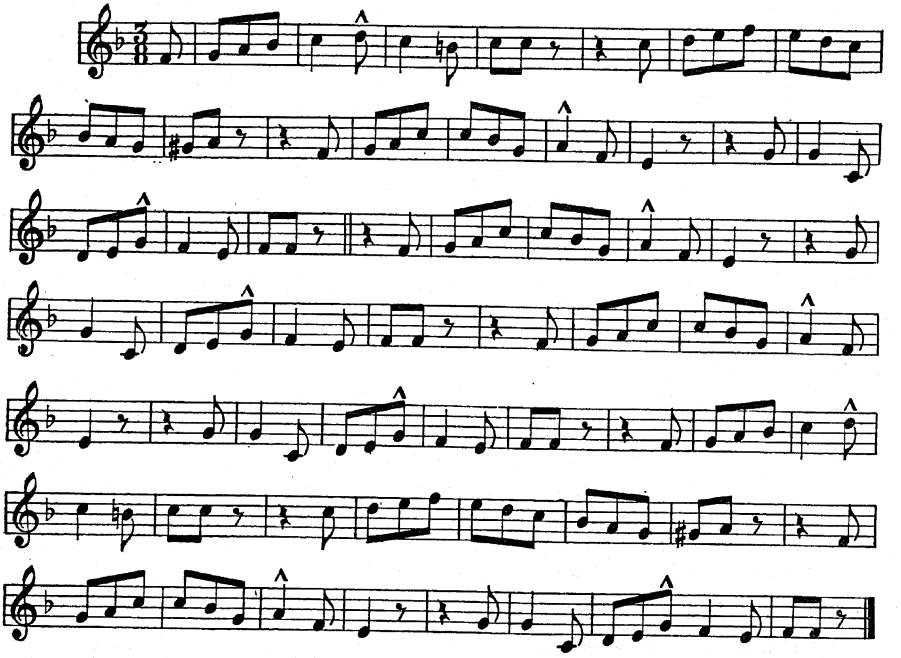
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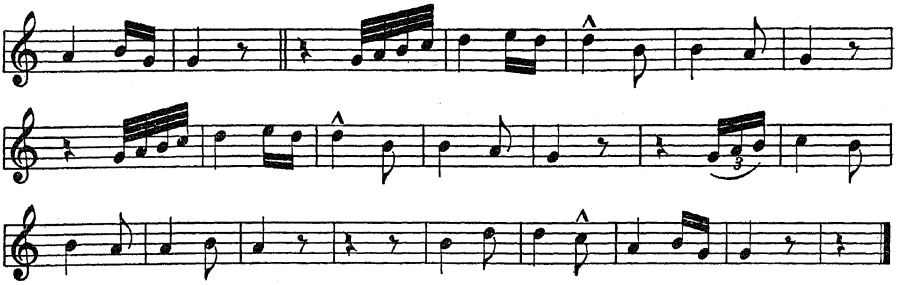
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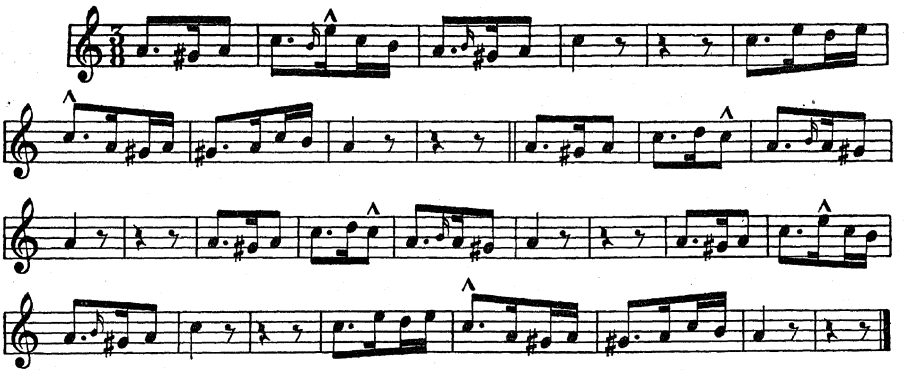
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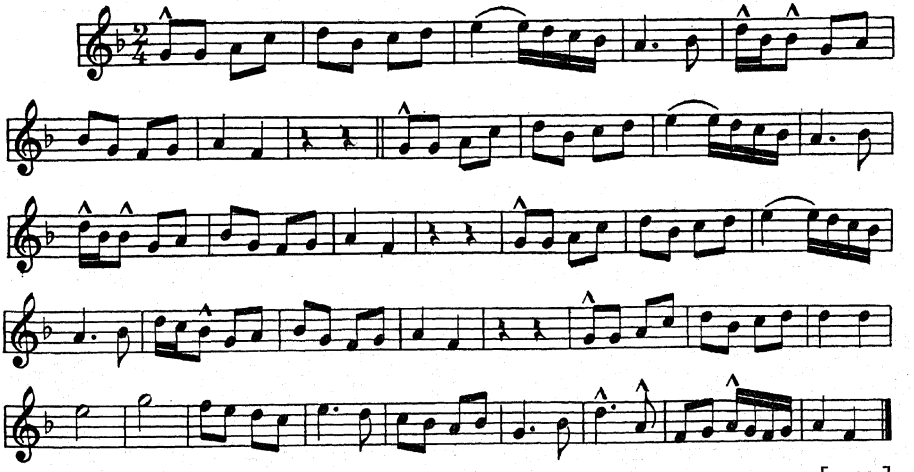
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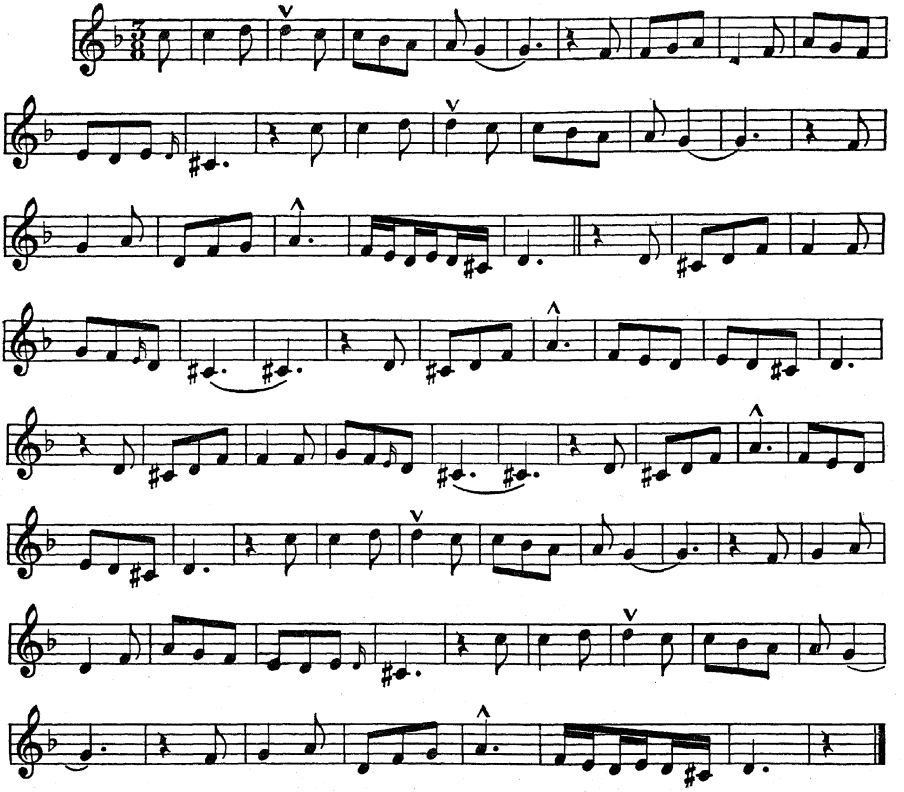
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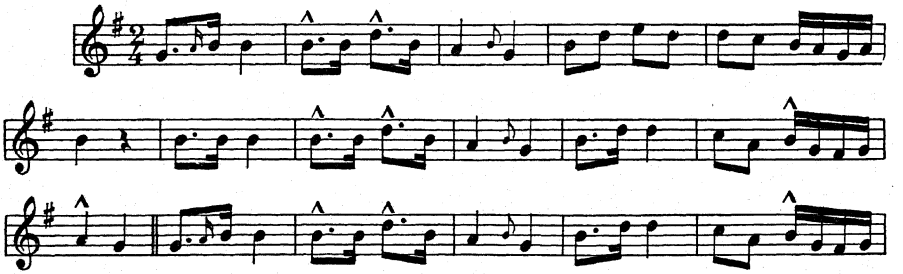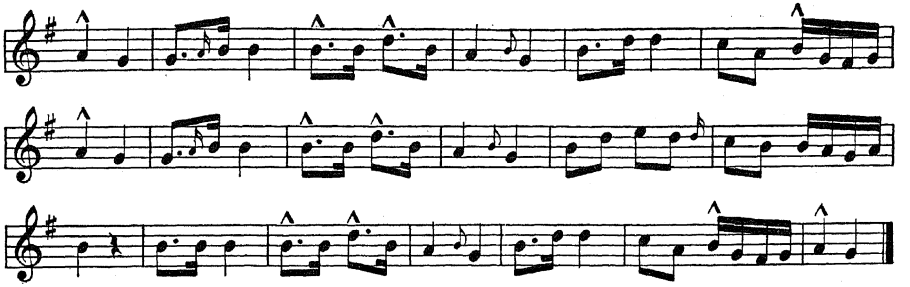
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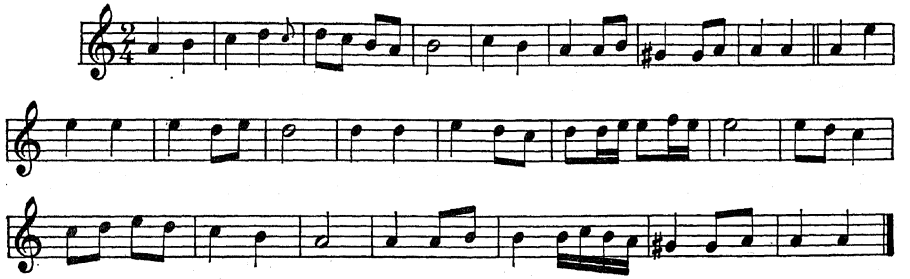
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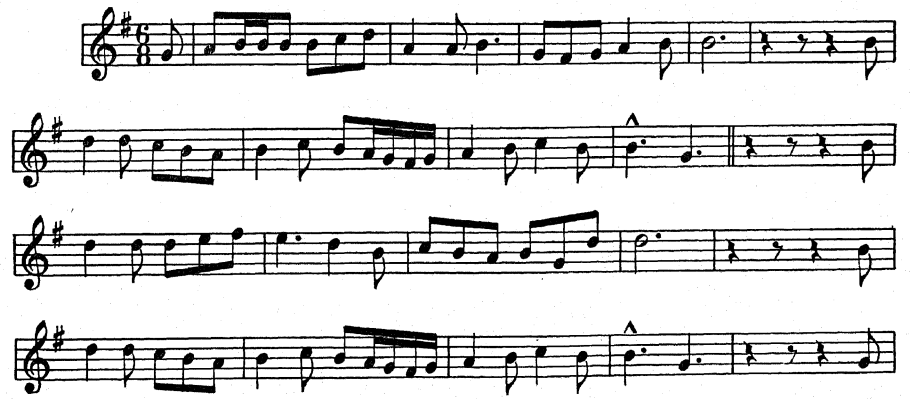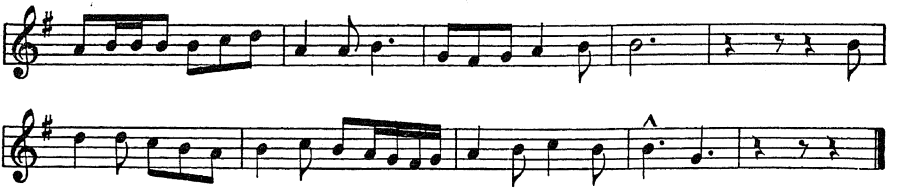
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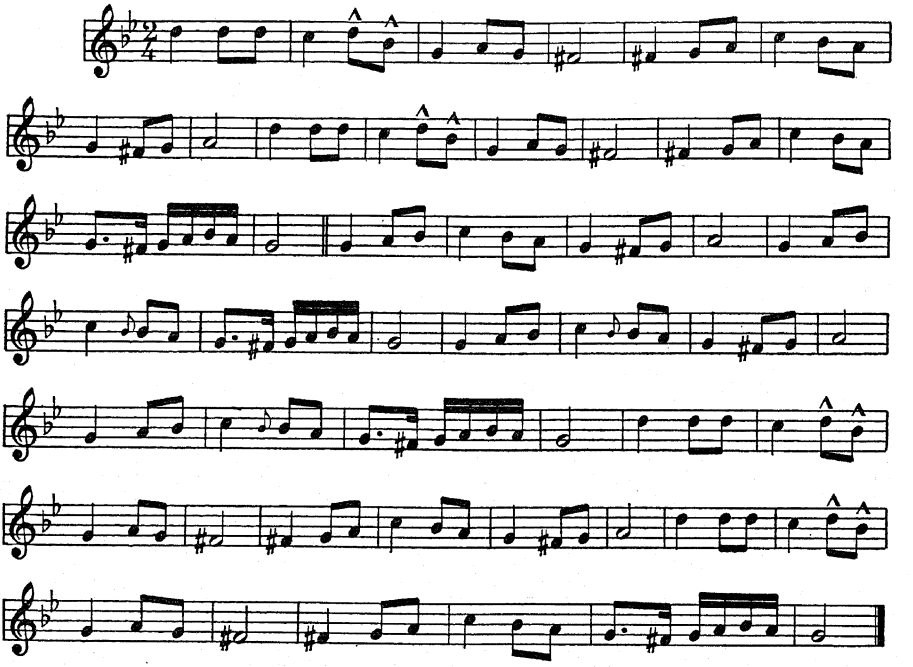
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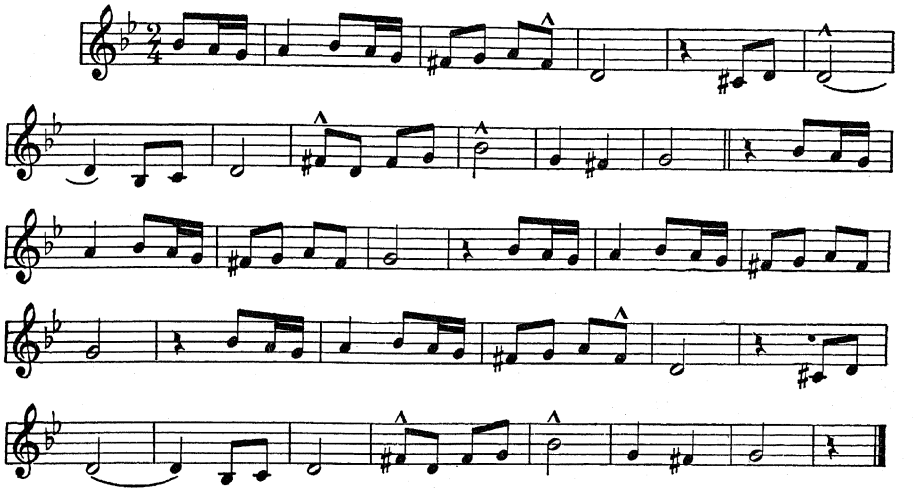
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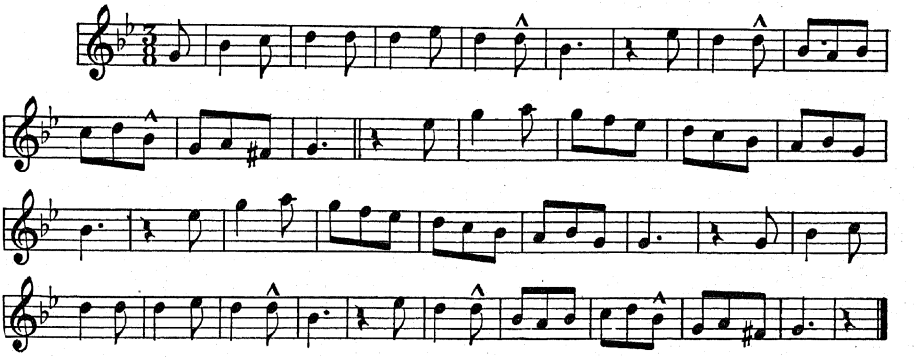
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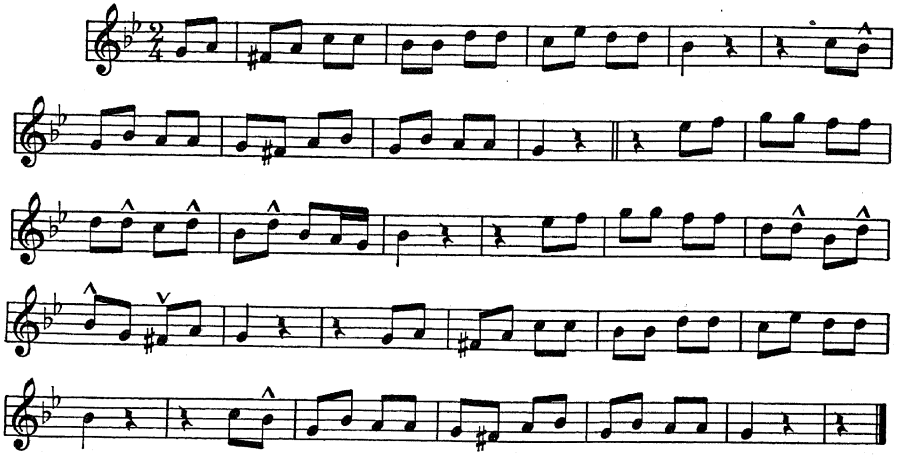
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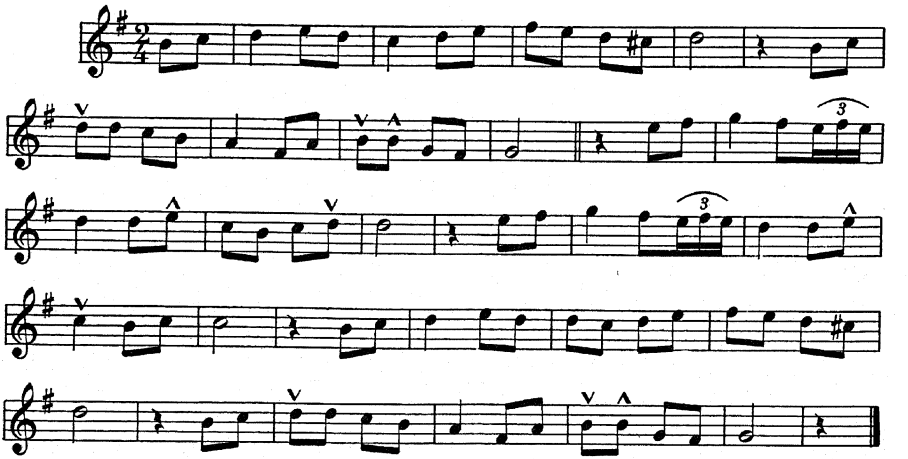
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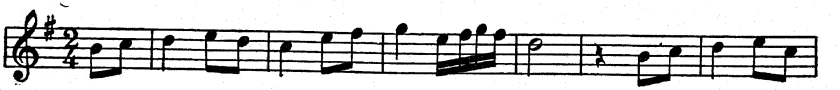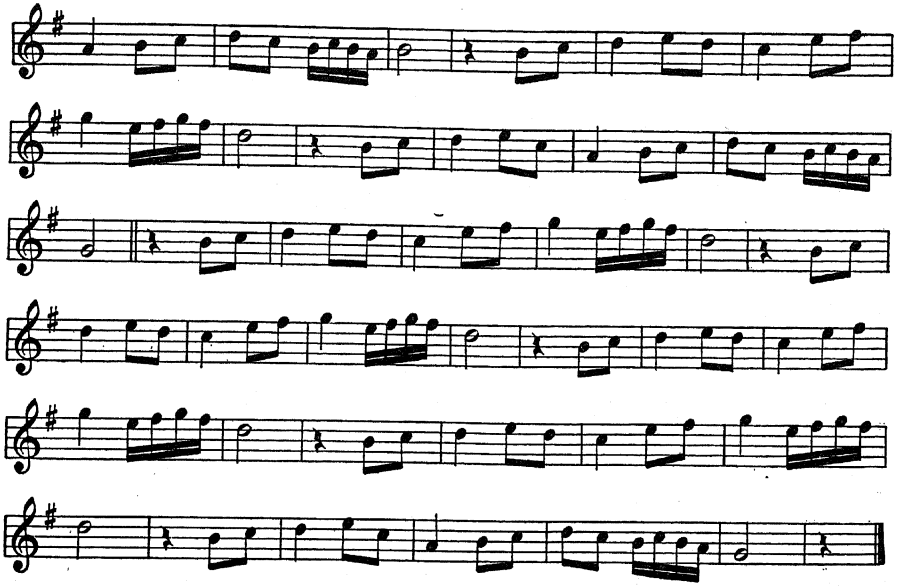
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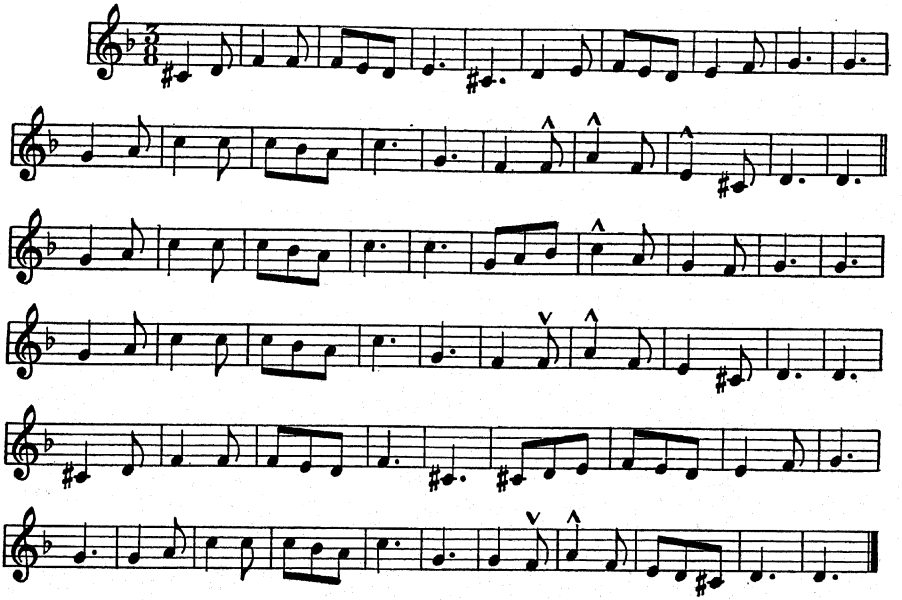
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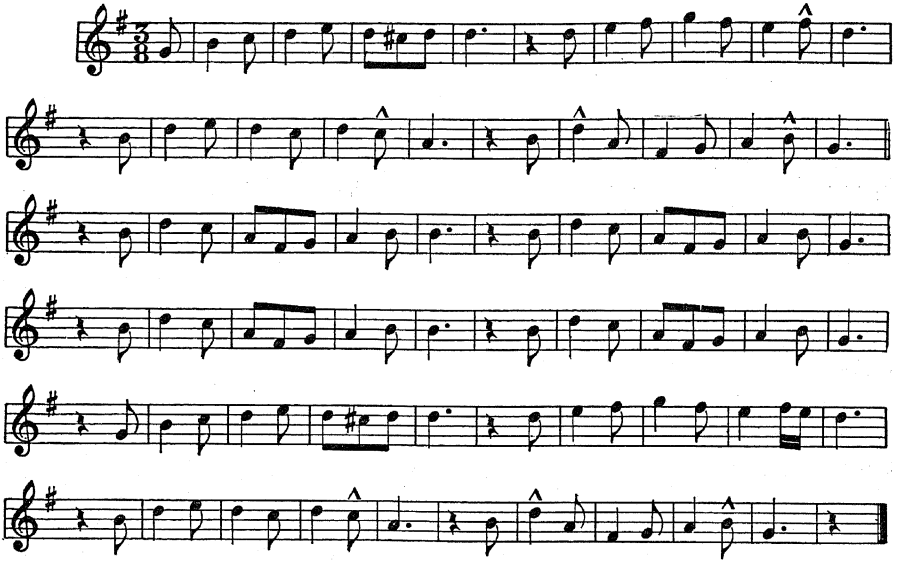
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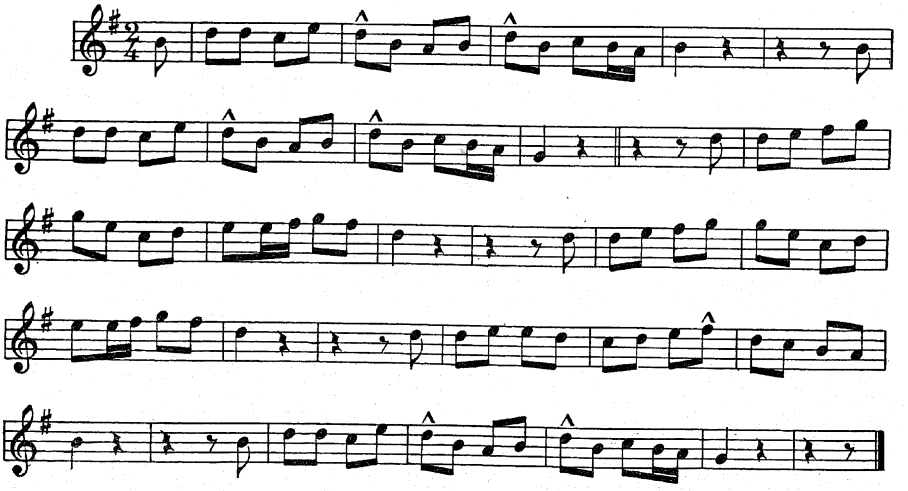
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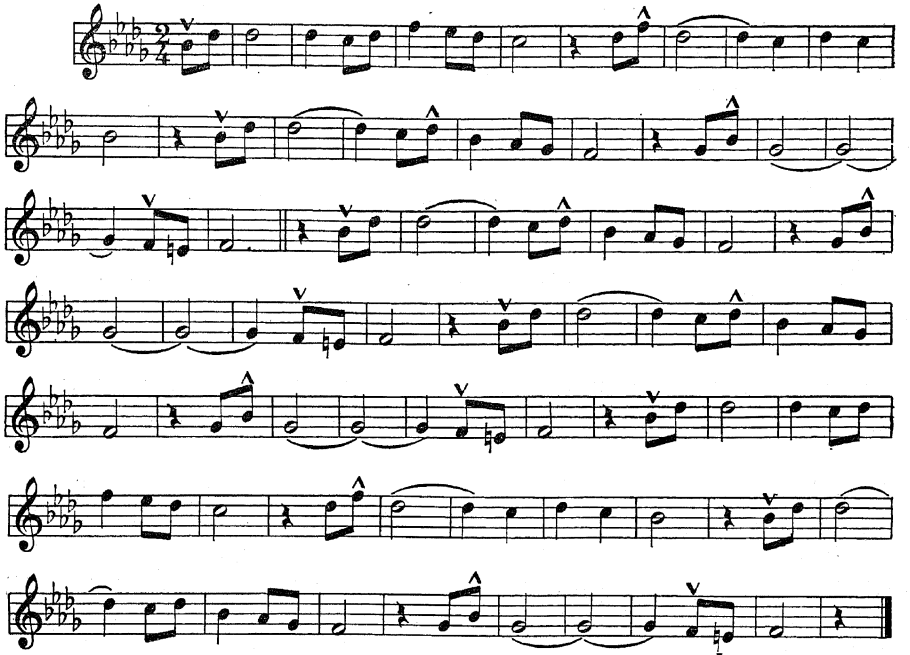
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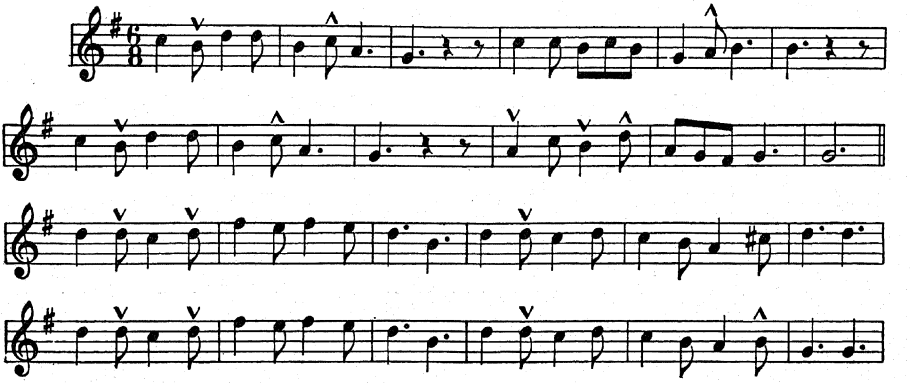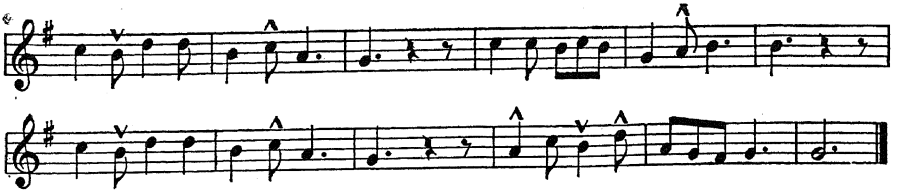
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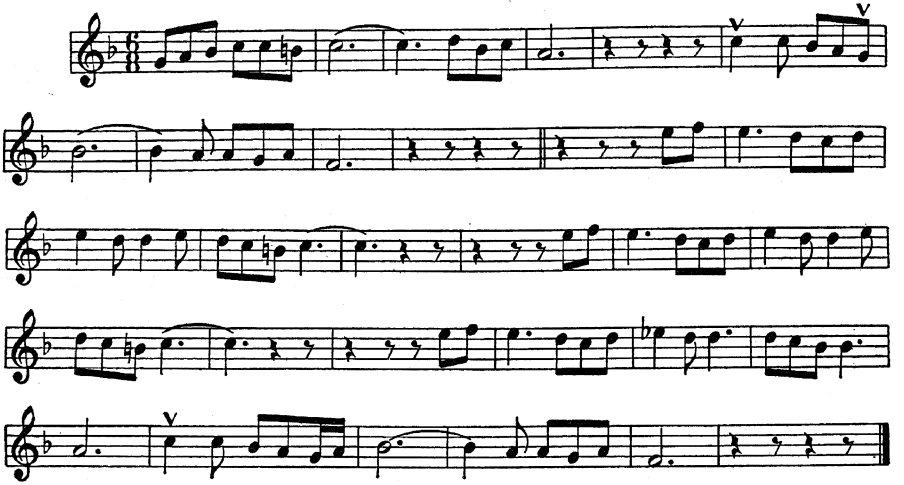
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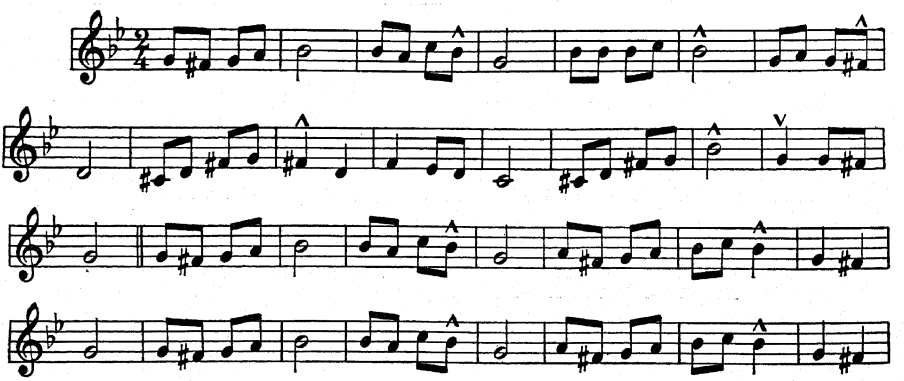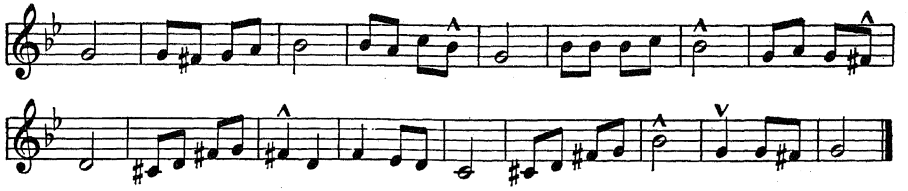
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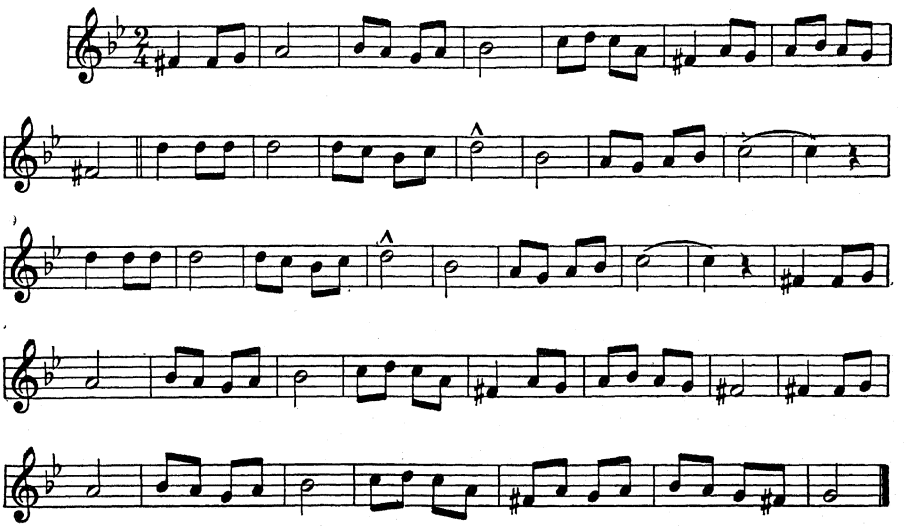
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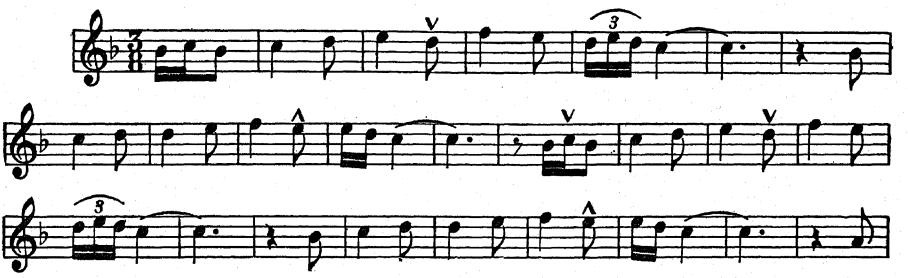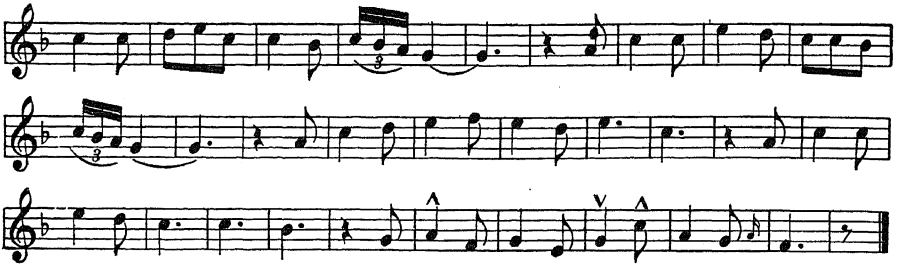
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[In this index the prefixes Al- ("the"), Abu ("father of"), and Ibn ("son of") are retained as part of the Arabic name and alphabetized according to the English system, since they are used without hyphen or space in the Spanish form of the name. "Ibn" becomes "bin" when standing between name of the son and that of the father. For instance, Ibn Zuhr ("son of Zuhr"), known in Spain as "Avenzoar," is here indexed under "Ibn"; but Ibrahim bin Al-Mahdi ("Ibrahim son of the Mahdi") is indexed under his own personal name, "Ibrahim."]

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